कठोपनिषत्

KATHA UPANISHAD

Parts 1 & 2

A Leap into the Beyond

"THE SANDEEPANY EXPERIENCE"

TEXT 20

Reflections by
SWAMI GURUBHAKTANANDA

Sandeepany's Vedanta Course

List of All the Course Texts in Chronological Sequence:

Text No.	TITLE OF TEXT	Text No.	TITLE OF TEXT
1	*Sadhana Panchakam*	24	*Hanuman Chalisa*
2	*Tattwa Bodha*	25	*Vakya Vritti*
3	*Atma Bodha*	26	*Advaita Makaranda*
4	*Bhaja Govindam*	27	*Kaivalya Upanishad*
5	*Manisha Panchakam*	28	*Bhagavad Geeta (Discourse --)*
6	*Forgive Me*	29	*Mundaka Upanishad*
7	*Upadesha Sara*	30	*Amritabindu Upanishad*
8	*Prashna Upanishad*	31	*Mukunda Mala (Bhakti Text)*
9	*Dhanyashtakam*	32	*Tapovan Shatkam*
10	*Bodha Sara*	33	*The Mahavakyas, Panchadasi 5*
11	*Viveka Choodamani*	34	*Aitareya Upanishad*
12	*Jnana Sara*	35	*Narada Bhakti Sutras*
13	*Drig-Drishya Viveka*	36	*Taittiriya Upanishad*
14	*"Tat Twam Asi" – Chand Up 6*	37	*Jivan Sutrani (Tips for Happy Living)*
15	*Dhyana Swaroopam*	38	*Kena Upanishad*
16	*"Bhoomaiva Sukham" Chand Up 7*	39	*Aparoksha Anubhuti (Meditation)*
17	*Manah Shodhanam*	40	*108 Names of Pujya Gurudev*
18	*"Nataka Deepa" – Panchadasi 10*	41	*Mandukya Upanishad*
19	*Isavasya Upanishad*	42	*Dakshinamurty Ashtakam*
20	***Katha Upanishad – Parts 1 & 2***	43	*Shad Darshanaah*
21	*"Sara Sangrah" – Yoga Vasishtha*	44	*Brahma Sootras*
22	*Vedanta Sara*	45	*Jivanmuktananda Lahari*
23	*Mahabharata + Geeta Dhyanam*	46	*Chinmaya Pledge*

A NOTE ABOUT SANDEEPANY

Sandeepany Sadhanalaya is an institution run by the Chinmaya Mission in Powai, Mumbai, teaching a 2-year Vedanta Course. It has a very balanced daily programme of basic Samskrit, Vedic chanting, Vedanta study, Bhagavatam, Ramacharitmanas, Bhajans, meditation, sports and fitness exercises, team-building outings, games and drama, celebration of all Hindu festivals, weekly Gayatri Havan and Guru Paduka Pooja, and Karma Yoga activities.

This series is an effort to promote the learning of Vedanta; it does not replace the Course, but hopes to inspire young people to spend two years of their life for an experience that is sure to make a far-reaching spiritual impact on their personal lives. Sandeepany is an all-round spiritual course that gives proper direction to the youth and to those approaching retirement. Hinduism is in dire need of a band of systematically trained teachers or Acharyas who can serve this Eternal Religion.

– The Author, 2nd September, 2018, Sri Krishna Jayanti Day

Om Namah Shivaaya!

Text
20

कठोपनिषत्

KATHA UPANISHAD

"A Leap Into the Beyond"

Parts 1 & 2 with Bhashya by

Sri Adi Shankaracharyaji

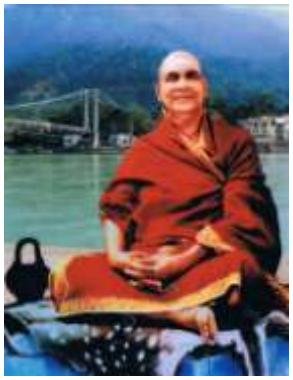
Reflections

by Swami Gurubhaktananda

on the 90 Lectures delivered by ***Swami Advayanandaji***
Acharyaji, 15th Batch Vedanta Course
at Sandeepany Sadhanalaya, Powai, Mumbai

July 17th – September 29th, 2012

Adi Shankaracharya



Swami Sivananda

Swami Tapovanji

Swami Chinmayananda

SERVE • LOVE • GIVE • PURIFY • MEDITATE • REALISE

Copyright & Author's Details

Author:
Swami Gurubhaktananda (ex Krishna Chaitanya, born Bipin R. Kapitan in Durban, South Africa)
Email: gurubhakta.dls@gmail.com
Residence: Sivanandashram, Rishikesh, India

© 2016 All Rights Reserved. *Copyright held by Swami Gurubhaktananda.*

About This Edition:
Web Edition: 2nd September, 2018, the Sacred Krishna Jayanti Day
Websie: Chinmaya International Foundation: www.chinfo.org
Series Title : **The Sandeepany Experience**
Series Subject: Vedanta & Supportive Subsidiary Textss

Declaration by the Author: *The material in this series is under inspiration of the Sandeepany Vedanta Course, but largely consists of the Author's reflections on the Course. He is deeply indebted to the Chinmaya Mission for its excellent presentation of the Course by their renowned and dedicated Acharyas.*

Personal Dedication

1. To my Parents, Smt Sharadaben & Sri Ratilalbhai Kapitan
who inspired me to study in life, to stick to the path of Dharma and pursue the highest ideals; and swamped me with their abundant Love;

2. To Pujya Sri Swami Vimalanandaji Maharaj
the President of the Divine Life Society of Rishikesh, Uttarakhand, India, who constantly encouraged and supported this effort;

3. To Pujya Sri Swami Tejomayanandaji (Guruji)
for his boundless vision and inspiration to create a vibrant organisation;

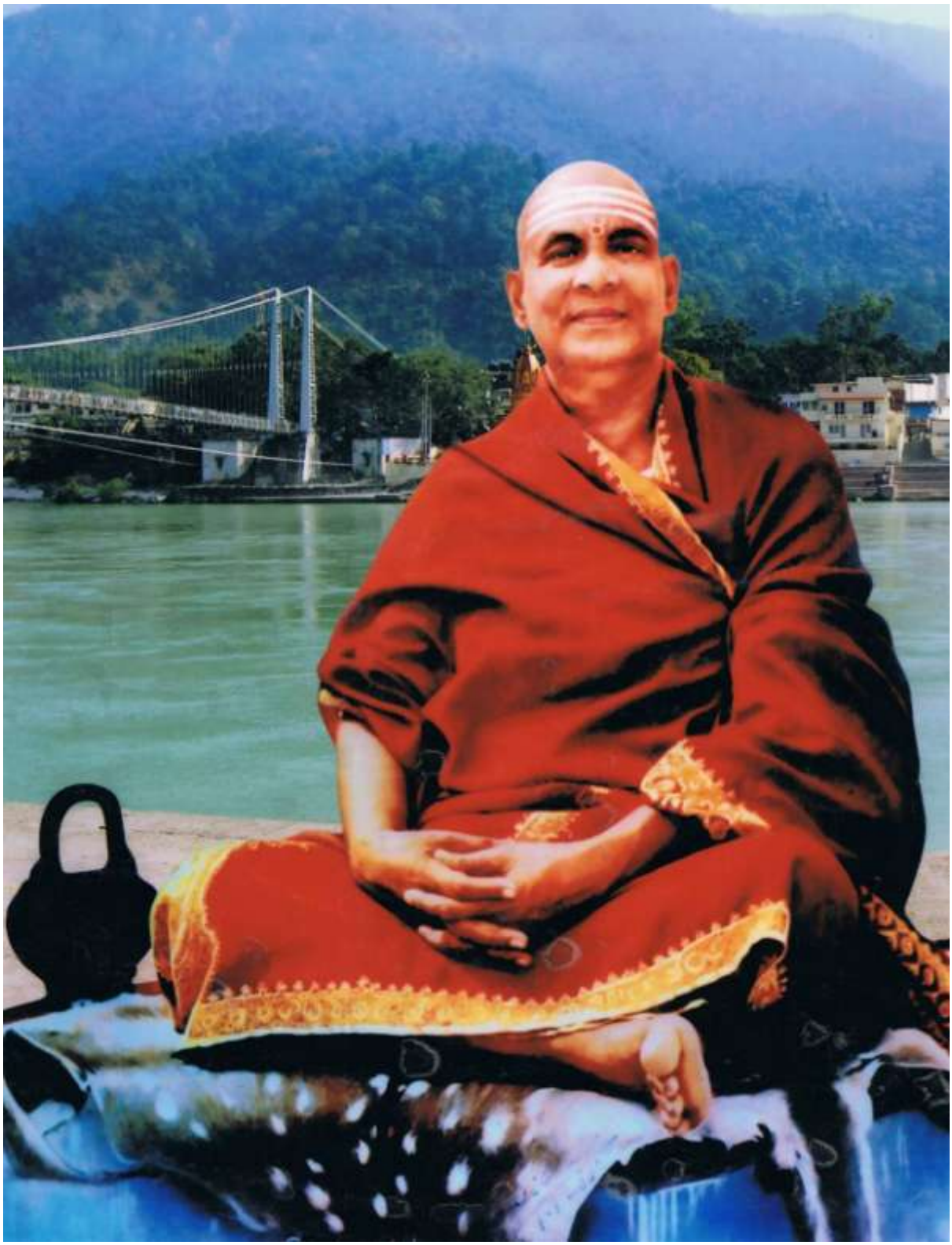
4. To Sri Swami Advayanandaji and Sri Swami Sharadanandaji
my Acharyaji and Upa-Acharyaji at Sandeepany, who imparted their bountiful knowledge and wisdom with rare selfless Divine Love, just as the Rishis of yore would wish to see them do.

*****

कठोपनिषत्

KATHA UPANISHAD

"A Leap into the Beyond"



SRI SWAMI SIVANANDA

(1887 – 1963)

KATHA UPANISHAD

"A Leap Into the Beyond"

CONTENTS:

	General Invocation	***7***
	***Introduction**: From Shankara Bhashya*	***8***
	About the Bhashya	***9***

PART 1 of 2 ***(Chapters 1.1, 1.2 & 1.3, Total 71 verses)***

Chapter 1.1:	***THE STORY OF NACHIKETAS***	**(29 verses)**	**10**
1.1.1:	***The Sacrifice of Nachiketas' Father***		***10***
1.1.2:	***Time for Gifts For the Priests***		***10***
1.1.3:	***Gifts Not Worth the Name***		***11***
1.1.4:	***Father's Curse on Nachiketas***		***11***
1.1.5:	***Nachiketas: "Do I Deserve This?"***		***12***
1.1.6:	***The Glory of Upholding Tradition***		***13***
1.1.7:	***Lord Yama Instructs on Hospitality***		***13***
1.1.8:	***Consequences of Inadvertence***		***14***
1.1.9:	***Lord Yama Offers Justice***		***15***
	THE FIRST BOON		
1.1.10:	***Boon 1: "Forgiveness for My Father"***		***16***
1.1.11:	***Yama Grants the First Boon***		***17***
	THE SECOND BOON		
1.1.12:	***The Joys of Heavenly Worlds***		***17***
1.1.13:	***Boon 2: "Heavenly Worlds for My People"***		***18***
1.1.14:	***Yama Grants the Second Boon***		***19***
1.1.15:	***Detailed Knowledge is Taught***		***20***
1.1.16:	***An Additional Bonus is Thrown In!***		***21***
1.1.17:	***The Fruits of Sacrificial Fire Worship***		***22***
1.1.18:	***Glorification of Sacrificial Fire Worship***		***23***
	THE THIRD BOON		
1.1.19:	***Yama Invites the Third Boon***		***24***
1.1.20:	***Boon 3: "Self-Knowledge for Me"***		***25***
1.1.21:	***Test 1: "It's Too Difficult For You!"***		***27***
1.1.22:	***Response 1: All the More Determined***		***28***
1.1.23:	***Test 2: Limitless Wealth Lordliness***		***29***
1.1.24:	***Test 3: Power & Enjoyership Added***		***30***
1.1.25:	***Test 4: Heavenly & Sexual Pleasures***		***31***
1.1.26:	***Response 2: Hero Over the Senses***		***32***

1.1.27: *Response 3: Wealth & Long Life Need No Boon* 33
1.1.28: *Response 4: Chooses Wisdom Over Folly* 33
1.1.29: *Response 5: "I Stick to My Original Boon"!* 34

Chapter 1.2: THE CHOICE (25 verses) 36

PREYAS & SREYAS
1.2.1: *The Choice Available to All Men* 36
1.2.2: *Discrimination Between the Two* 33
1.2.3: *Yama Praises Nachiketas's Discrimination* 38
1.2.4: *Vidya and Avidya = Sreyas and Preyas* 39
1.2.5: *Preyas: Blind Leading the Blind* 41
1.2.6: *Preyas: A False Vision* 42

THE GURU & DISCIPLE RELATIONSHIP
1.2.7: *Wonder Teacher & Wonder Disciple* 43
1.2.8: *Principles in Spiritual Teaching* 44
1.2.9: *The Exemplary Standard Set by Nachiketas* 46
1.2.10: *Yama's Attainment* 47
1.2.11: *Nachiketas's Attainment* 48
1.2.12: *The Means to the Supreme Self* 49
1.2.13: *Details of the Sadhana Process* 50
1.2.14: *Boon 3: A Reminder Re-Phrased* 51

"OM" UPASANA
1.2.15: *The Goal of All Spiritual Efforts – "OM"* 52
1.2.16: *The Scope Covered by "Om"* 53
1.2.17: *A Eulogy of "Om"* 54

SAANKHYA YOGA (as in Geeta)
1.2.18: *The Yoga of the Self* 55
1.2.19: *What is Action & Inaction* 56
1.2.20: *Self-Knowledge – 1: Majesty of the Self* 57
1.2.21: *Self-Knowledge – 2: Contradictions in the Self* 58
1.2.22: *Self-Knowledge – 3: Meditation on the Self* 59

THE ESSENTIAL QUALIFICATION
1.2.23: *The Sole Condition: Choose the Self* 60
1.2.24: *The Man of Sinful Conduct* 62
1.2.25: *Simile: The Lord at His Meal* 63

Chapter 1.3: THE JOURNEY AHEAD (17 verses) 65

THE TRAVELLERS
1.3.1: *Simile: The Two Drinkers* 65
1.3.2: *Summary Statement of Chapters 1 & 2* 68

THE CHARIOT METAPHOR
1.3.3/4: *The Chariot Metaphor Introduced* 69

1.3.5/6:	*The Intellect: Avijnanavan and Vijnanavan*	*70*
1.3.7/8/9:	*The Destination: Successfully Reaching the Goal*	*71*
	THE ROUTE OF THE JOURNEY	
1.3.10/11:	*The Journey Mapped Out*	*72*
1.3.12:	*Self Seen Only by Subtle Intellect*	*76*
1.3.13:	*Successive Merging from Speech to Self*	*77*
	THE GLORY OF THIS JOURNEY	
1.3.14:	*A Wake-Up Call From the Wise*	*78*
1.3.15:	*Subtlety of the Supreme Self*	*79*
1.3.16:	*Glory of the "Nachiketas" Knowledge*	*81*
1.3.17:	*Auspicious Recitation of this Knowledge*	*82*

PART 2/2 *(Chapters 2.1, 2.2 & 2.3, Total 49 verses)*

Chapter 2.1: *THE POWER OF KNOWLEDGE* (15 verses) 85

	TWO OBSTACLES TO KNOWLEDGE	
2.1.1:	*First Obstacle: The "Punished" Senses*	*85*
2.1.2:	*Second Obstacle: The Mind's Thirst for Pleasure*	*87*
	INTELLECT – INDIVIDUAL INTELLIGENCE	
2.1.3:	*The Cogniser of Sense Experiences*	*88*
2.1.4:	*Witness of the Three States*	*89*
2.1.5:	*Keeper of Karmic Accounts*	*89*
	HIRANYAGARBHA – TOTAL INTELLIGENCE	
2.1.6/7:	*Hiranyagarbha – Brahman in Subtle Creation*	*91*
2.1.8:	*Hiranyagarbha's Worship in Virat*	*93*
	BRAHMAN – ABSOLUTE INTELLIGENCE	
2.1.9:	*Brahman – the Ultimate Support*	*95*
2.1.10:	*Brahman is Both "Here" & "There"*	*96*
2.1.11:	*Mind – Centre-Stage for Sadhana*	*97*
2.1.12/13:	*Upasana: The "Thumb-Sized" Brahman*	*99*
2.1.14:	*Dispersion Into Plurality*	*100*
2.1.15:	*Adherence to Non-Duality*	*100*

Chapter 2.2: *THE SEARCH FOR BRAHMAN* (15 verses) 103

	THE IMMANENT BRAHMAN	
2.2.1:	*Brahman in the "Eleven-Gated City"*	*103*
2.2.2:	*Brahman – Everywhere, in Everything*	*105*
2.2.3:	*Brahman – Director of Pranas & Deities*	*106*
2.2.4:	*When the Body is Negated, What Remains?*	*108*
2.2.5:	*When Prana is Negated, What Remains?*	*109*
2.2.6:	*When the Body Departs, What Remains?*	*110*

2.2.7:	*Answer 1: While in Ignorance*	*111*
2.2.8:	*Answer 2: When Knowledge Dawns*	*112*
	THE TRANSCENDENT BRAHMAN	
2.2.9/10/11:	*The Immanence & Transcendence of the Self*	*115*
2.2.12/13:	*Being One, Controlling All*	*117*
2.2.14/15:	*"The Self is Self-Luminous, & Shines Variously!"*	*118*

Chapter 2.3:	*A SPIRITUAL PLAN FOR LIFE*	(19 verses)	122
	THE TREE OF SAMSARA		
2.3.1:	*The "Tree of Samsara"*		*122*
2.3.2:	*The "Terror of the Thunderbolt"!*		*125*
2.3.3:	*Order in the Cosmos*		*125*
	THE PRECIOUS HUMAN BIRTH		
2.3.4:	*Rebirth Continues Until Realisation*		*126*
2.3.5:	*Four "Worlds" of Clarity*		*127*
2.3.6:	*The Dissimilarity of the Senses & Self*		*129*
	THE LAUNCH PAD OF YOGA		
2.3.7:	*Ladder from Sense Organs to Total Mind*		*130*
2.3.8:	*Ladder from Total Mind to Attributeless Brahman*		*131*
2.3.9:	*The Subdual of the Mind*		*132*
2.3.10:	*Total Withdrawal of the Senses*		*132*
2.3.11:	*The Launch Pad – A Quiet Mind*		*133*
	THE FINAL LAP INTO ETERNITY		
2.3.12:	*"He Exists" – Minimum Qualification*		*134*
2.3.13:	*Faith Earns Favour to Go Further*		*135*
2.3.14:	*Desirelessness Leads to Immortality*		*137*
2.3.15:	*What is Desirelessness?*		*138*
	THE PHALA OR REWARD OF SADHANA		
2.3.16:	*The "Nerves" of the Heart*		*139*
2.3.17:	*Final Summary of the Teaching*		*142*
2.3.18:	*Conclusion of the Upanishad*		*143*
2.3.19:	*The Valedictory Prayer*		*144*

TOTAL VERSES = 120 No.

*****

कठोपनिषत्–१

KATHA UPANISHAD

Part 1 – Total 71 Verses

Chapters 1.1, 1.2 & 1.3

*****

Chapter 1.0

INVOCATION & INTRODUCTION

मङ्गलाचरण् :

PEACE INVOCATION

ॐ सह नाववतु । सह नौ भुनक्तु । सहवीर्यं करवावहै ।
तेजस्वि नावधीतमस्तु । मा विद्विषावहै ॥
ॐ शान्तिः, शान्तिः, शान्तिः ॥

ōm̐ saha nāvavatu | saha nau bhunaktu | sahavīryaṁ karavāvahai |
tējasvi nāvadhītamastu | mā vidviṣāvahai ||
ōm̐ śāntiḥ śāntiḥ śāntiḥ ||

om saha naavavatu;	*May He protect us both together.*
saha nau bhunaktu;	*May He protect us both.*
saha veeryam karavaavahai;	*May we attain vigour together.*
tejaswi naavadheetam-astu;	*Let what we study be invigorating.*
maa vidvishaavahai.	*May we not cavil at each other.*
om shantih, shantih, shantih!	*Om Peace, Peace, Peace!*

THIS IS A VERY COMMON chant prior to the start of any study between teacher and students. It is universal in nature. It overcomes the main difficulties which stand in the way of grasping knowledge. The main points are:

i) To bring quietness, peace and stillness into the minds of teacher and student, so that the mind can be focused easily on the knowledge.

ii) To bring up the correct attitude that the student and the teacher should have in order to make the learning effective. The prayer is for an attitude of understanding and respect, and avoiding all useless debating and arguing.

iii) To promote a vigorous intellect, so that the Truth may be reflected upon from all angles and assimilated well into the mind in its true import.

During studies, it is vital that conditions encourage these three to come forth. The teacher and student cannot exist without each other. To protect their harmony is crucial.

Both must put forth effort to grasp the knowledge. Both must look forward to the class. There must be joy in the learning process. The end result desired is clarity of understanding., without doubts, and abidance in the knowledge. The knowledge must be lived, this is not just an intellectual pursuit.

May teacher and taught come to love each other eternally. Let it not be just a business relationship. There should no ill-will or disrespect between them.

INTRODUCTION

from Shankara Bhashya

SALUTATIONS TO Bhagavan Yama (Death), son of the Sun and the imparter of the knowledge of Brahman, and salutation to Nachiketas!

Now then, a brief exposition of the Cantos of the *Katha Upanishad* is begun for the sake of making their import easily comprehensible.

The Word *"Upanishad"*

This word is derived by adding two Upasargas, namely ***upa*** (near) and ***ni*** (with certainty), and *kvip* as a suffix to the root of the word ***sad.*** Sad has three meanings:

i) To split up or destroy;
ii) To go, reach or attain;
iii) To loosen or weaken the hold of.

These three meanings will be brought out in this introduction.

Further, by the word 'Upanishad' is denoted here the ***Knowledge*** of the knowable Entity that is going to be explained in this book. The relationship between the word Upanishad and Knowledge is brought out here.

Upanishad as Knowledge

Upanishad is taken to mean "knowledge" by association with each of the three meanings of '*Sad'* given above:

i) The knowledge of the Upanishads splits up, injures or destroys the seeds of worldly existence such as ignorance, etc., in the case of those seekers who, after becoming detached from the desire for the seen and unseen objects, approach it (the knowledge) and deliberate on it with steadiness and certainty. "Knowing That, one becomes free from the jaws of Death," (3.15).

ii) Because of its connection with the idea of leading to Brahman, it makes seekers of liberation who possess the qualities mentioned already, attain the supreme Brahman. "Having become free from virtue and vice, as also desire and ignorance, he attained Brahman," (6.18).

iii) The second boon of Nachiketas asked for the knowledge of Fire, which is explained in the text as a knowledge that is below the level of Self-Knowledge, but which is in accord with Dharma and leads one to the worlds which are free from sorrows, etc. Even such knowledge, known commonly as Karma Kanda or Upasana, is referred to as Upanishad. This is because it 'loosens or weakens' the firm hold that the multitude of miseries have on the soul – namely birth, death, old age, etc. – which recur in endless lives. This loosening of their grip on man is a step towards the ultimate goal of reaching Brahman. Hence it is also considered to be a sub-definition of knowledge for the word 'Upanishad'.

"The dwellers of heaven get immortality," is a quote that refers to this knowledge.

Upanishad as Book

The definition of Upanishad as a book also stands without contradicting what has been said already. The book is meant for the purpose of giving the knowledge only. And so it can justifiably be denoted by the word 'Knowledge'. For example, in the sentence "Ghee

(Clarified butter) is indeed life," the word *ghee*, because it leads to enhancing one's life, is itself called life. Similarly, with regard to the word 'Upanishad', the primary sense in which it is used is the knowledge it stands for; only in a secondary sense does it mean a book.

Anubandha Chatushtaya: "Prospectus" of the Katha Upanishad

The definition of the word Upanishad itself points out the person qualified to read this book. The subject matter is the supreme Brahman, the indwelling Self. The purpose of the Upanishad is the absolute cessation of the transmigratory state, which consists in the attainment of Brahman. And the connection or Sambandha is the knowledge itself that leads one to Brahman. It is a Bodhya–Bodhaka Sambandha (revealer-revealed relationship).

Shankaracharyaji explains these cantos for our best understanding. The story therein is for the sake of eulogizing the knowledge.

ABOUT THE BHASHYA:

The following verse contains all that constitutes a perfect Bhashya:

sootraartho varnyate yata, padaih sootraaru saaribhih;
swapadaani cha varnyante, bhaashyam bhaashyavido vidhuh.

Meaning:

i) "The original text is in very concise Sutras.
ii) "The meaning of the Sutras are explained in an elaborate way.
iii) Every word is explained, following the Sutra word by word.

[All optional meanings are given, and then those that do not apply are eliminated with reasons, until only the meaning applicable is left.]

iv) "Then one's own explanation is explained.
"Know this to be the exemplary art of Bhashyas."

If these four steps are followed, then we have a Bhashya.

We will go through the Shankaracharya Bhashya word for word for this entire text. We will discover the 'teacher' in Shankaracharya. He is very enthusiastic, and full of gusto. He talks to us through this Bhashya. The Kathopanishad Bhashya is a good one to start with as it is simple and flowing, and the words of the original are easy to pick out.

At the end of this text, we aim to get a good understanding of how to read through a Bhashya. There is an art in studying a Bhashya. Our Samskrit will also greatly improve.

Shankaracharyaji has written Bhashyas on all the 10 major Upanishads. They are Isa, Kena, Katha, Prashna, Mundaka, Maandukya, Taittiriya, Aitareya, Chaandogya and Brihad-aranyaka. His Bhashyas have set the benchmark in this field.

How much we drink from the Bhashya depends on how thirsty we are! To start with, we may just read the general meaning; then we can select some of the important words; if we are serious, we can go through *every* word in detail.

We are fortunate to have Swami Gambhiranandaji's word-for-word translation of the Bhashya. We are encouraged to use it well, to the best of our capacity.

*****

Chapter 1.1: (29 verses)

THE STORY OF NACHIKETAS

THIS IS THE AMAZING story of a little boy, barely ten years old, who is sent in anger by his father to the world of Lord Yama. There the boy meets Death face to face, spurns all his tempting offers of pleasures and temporal power, and extracts from him the boon of knowledge of the Self. Young as he is, the boy exhibits the highest Mumukshutva and Vairagya – i.e. an intense longing to see God and dispassion for all worldly pleasures.

1.1.1: ***The Sacrifice of Nachiketas' Father***

ॐ उशन् ह वै वाजश्रवसः सर्ववेदसं ददौ ।
तस्य ह नचिकेता नाम पुत्र आस ॥ १.१.१॥

ōm̐ uśan ha vai vājaśravasaḥ, sarvavēdasaṁ dadau |
tasya ha nacikētā nāma putra āsa ||1.1.1||

1	*Ushan ha vai vaajashravasah*	*Desirous of heavenly rewards, the son of a Vajashrava,*
2	*sarva-vedasam dadau;*	*that is, of one who gave away all that he possessed,*
3	*tasya ha nachiketaah naama putrah aasa.*	*to him was born a son named Nachiketas.*

3 The father of Nachiketas was a man called Gautama.

1-2 Gautama's father was a Vajasrava, or one who had become famous for his distribution of food in charity. Was it a case of 'like father, like son'? Well, we shall see.

Gautama wished to perform a sacrifice called Vishwajit, meaning "Victory over the whole universe". The performer aims to gain the fruit of going to a higher world and enjoying the pleasures there. One of the rules for this sacrifice is to be a Vajasrava, a 'Giver'.

1.1.2: ***Time for Gifts For the Priests***

तँ ह कुमारँ सन्तं दक्षिणासु
नीयमानासु श्रद्धाविवेश सोऽमन्यत ॥ १.१.२॥

tam̐ ha kumāram̐ santaṁ dakṣiṇāsu
nīyamānāsu śraddhāvivēśa sō:'manyata || 1.1.2||

1	*Tam ha kumaaram santam*	*Even though he was still an innocent little boy,*
2	*dakshinaasu neeyamaanaasu;*	*as presents were being carried to the Brahmanas,*
3	*shraddhaa-aavivesha.*	*filial anxiety entered his heart for his father.*
4	*sah amanyata.*	*He thought:*

1 The innocent boy noticed something not quite right about the presents that were being given to the priests.

2 Gautama had everything performed perfectly by competent priests. When the ceremony was complete, it was time to give the Dakshina or presents to the priests.

3-4 He was filled with concern for his father when he saw what was to be given. He became filled with filial anxiety. He mused thus…

1.1.3: *Gifts Not Worth the Name*

पीतोदका जग्धतृणा दुग्धदोहा निरिन्द्रियाः ।
अनन्दा नाम ते लोकास्तान् स गच्छति ता ददत् ॥ १.१.३॥

pītōdakā jagdhatr̥ṇā dugdhadōhā nirindriyāḥ |
anandā nāma tē lōkāstān sa gacchati tā dadat || 1.1.3||

		Nachiketas to himself:
1	*Peetodakaa, jagdha-trunaa,*	*"(These cows) have drunk water (for the last time), and eaten grass (for the last time),*
2	*dugdha-dohaa, nir-indriyaah;*	*they have yielded all their milk (cannot yield any more), and have lost their senses (become barren).*
3	*a-nandaa naama te lokaah*	*Joyless, indeed, are the worlds*
4	*taan sah gacchhati taah dadat.*	*to which he goes who gives these as presents!"*

1-2 The cows being given were too old even to eat grass or drink water, let alone produce any milk or bear calves. Such cows, which would become a burden to the one receiving them, were being given by the father. They could not produce any more calves at their age. They were totally useless. Some miserliness must have crept into him who had given away so much in the sacrifice. The boy felt he had to help his father to understand the serious consequences of giving such gifts.

3-4 His father would stand to lose all the merit of performing the sacrifice. The very purpose, for which he had done this sacrifice, would be defeated.

How to bring this to his father's notice without annoying him, whom he loved dearly? Being very intelligent, he had to be as tactful as his age permitted, so as not to hurt his father. This is how he did it….

1.1.4: *Father's Curse on Nachiketas*

स होवाच पितरं तत कस्मै मां दास्यसीति ।
द्वितीयं तृतीयं तँ होवाच मृत्यवे त्वा ददामीति ॥ १.१.४॥

sa hōvāca pitaraṁ tata kasmai māṁ dāsyasīti |
dvitīyaṁ tr̥tīyaṁ taṁ̆ hōvāca mr̥tyavē tvā dadāmīti || 1.1.4||

1	*Sa ha uvaacha pitaram taata*	*He said unto his father:*
2	*"Kasmai maam daasyasi?" iti;*	*"To whom wilt thou give me?"*
3	*dviteeyam triteeyam tam ha uvaacha.*	*(He repeated this) a second and a third time. (Then his father angrily) retorted to him:*
4	*"Mrityave tvaa dadaami!" iti.*	*"Unto Death do I give thee!"*

1 In saying this, his only motive was to protect his father's reputation.

2 It was to convey to his father that giving useless cows was worse than not giving anything at all. The receiver of these cows would have a big burden on his head. Was he also going to be a burden on someone's head? These are the feelings that accompanied Nachiketas's question to his father. The boy could sense that his father was "cutting corners" in his sacrificial gifts. It implied that in reality he was still attached to his wealth, and as such would not get the merit of the sacrifice.

3-4 His father, however, turned a deaf ear to this nagging questioning from his son. But the boy repeated it again and again. Soon the father became irritated, and blurted out in anger, "I will give you to Yama, the Lord of Death!"

This was an ominous curse. It was uttered already and it was too late to withdraw it. The boy was seriously affected by it. This is how he thought . . .

1.1.5: ***Nachiketas: "Do I Deserve This?"***

बहूनामेमि प्रथमो बहूनामेमि मध्यमः ।
किँ स्विद्यमस्य कर्तव्यं यन्मयाऽद्य करिष्यति ॥ १.१.५॥

bahūnāmēmi prathamō bahūnāmēmi madhyamaḥ |
kiṁ svidyamasya kartavyaṁ yanmayā:'dya kariṣyati || 1.1.5||

		Nachiketas to himself:
1	*Bahoonaam emi prathamah*	*"Among many, let me be in the first category; (if not)*
2	*bahoonaam emi madhyamah;*	*among many, at least let me be in the mediocre class;*
3	*kimsvid yamasya kartavyam*	*What purpose of Yama is*
4	*yat mayaa adya karishyati.*	*now going to be served through me?"*

It hurt him to see that his father did not grasp his advice for his own good, and instead became angry.

1-2 The boy Nachiketas assesses himself mentally: I should be in the *first* grade of sons who act the father's wishes before he utters them; if not, at least I should be in the *second* grade who does perfectly after his father instructs; let me not be in the *third* grade who does poorly what his father instructs; and never be in the *fourth* grade who does not do even when he is told many times.

3-4 After such introspection, he thinks what his father would gain by this curse; he would only lose his son. And then, of himself, of what use is he going to be to Lord Yama?

When his anger subsided, the father realized his foolishness done in a moment of weakness. But it was too late. The son was made of stern stuff. They were uttered while the Yajna fires were still burning, so they were part of the Yajna – and they had to be fulfilled.

1.1.6: ***The Glory of Upholding Tradition***

अनुपश्य यथा पूर्वे प्रतिपश्य तथाऽपरे ।
सस्यमिव मर्त्यः पच्यते सस्यमिवाजायते पुनः ॥ १.१.६॥

anupaśya yathā pūrvē pratipaśya tathā:'parē |
sasyamiva martyaḥ pacyatē sasyamivājāyatē punaḥ || 1.1.6||

		Nachiketas to his Father:
1	*Anupashya yathaa poorve*	*"Consider how your forefathers behaved.*
2	*prati-pashya tathaa apare;*	*And consider how others behave (now)."*
3	*sasyam iva martyah pachyate*	*To himself: "Like corn does Man decay and die;*
4	*sasyam iva aajaayate punah.*	*like corn he emerges (or is born) again."*

At this point come out words from the little boy Nachiketas which belie his age. He tells his father a deep philosophical truth about his action and its consequences.

The verse may be split into two parts:

1-2 i) This part is addressed to the father as food for thought.

3-4 ii) This part is a soliloquy when, just before making his way to the abode of Death, he ponders inwardly how fickle one's life-span is.

1 Their forefathers lived an exemplary life. His grandfather was well-known for his charity (verse 1). Could his father not see that and behave accordingly? By not giving the right charity to the priests, he was breaking a respectable family tradition. He had brought degradation of the family name.

2 Besides the family forefathers, there are the examples of great and wise ones even today who practice the traditions of the past in such matters as charity.

3-4 The trip to Yama's abode is on the boy's mind. We may infer that his father probably begged him not to go. But Nachiketas stood for the truth and would not retract on the curse. He was ready to go, and unafraid of Lord Yama. He philosophises how insignificant life is on earth – "Man decays and dies like corn." This world is impermanent and human life is even more fragile. Of what use is it to break one's words?

Thus the boy did what was necessary for him to go to Yama-Loka and offer himself as a 'Gift' to Lord Yama from his father. Upon reaching Lord Yama's abode, he found that Yama was out on his usual duty on Earth. Nachiketas waited for three days and nights, refusing to eat anything that was offered to him by Yama's wife or housekeepers. On Yama's return his family informed him of what happened. Lord Yama's response is as follows:

1.1.7: ***Lord Yama Instructs on Hospitality***

वैश्वानरः प्रविशत्यतिथिर्ब्राह्मणो गृहान् ।
तस्यैताँ शान्तिं कुर्वन्ति हर वैवस्वतोदकम् ॥ १.१.७॥

vaiśvānaraḥ praviśatyatithirbrāhmaṇō gr̥hān |
tasyaitām̐ śāntiṁ kurvanti hara vaivasvatōdakam || 1.1.7||

		Lord Yama says to his family:
1	*Vaishvaanarah pravishati*	*"Like the entry of fire,*
2	*atithih braahmanah grihaan;*	*a Brahmana guest has come to our house.*
3	*tasya etaam shaantim kurvanti*	*We should pacify him, as is customary (amongst us)*
4	*hara vaivasvata udakam.*	*Go, fetch (cool) water for Vaivasvata to drink.*

These words are probably uttered by Lord Yama to his wife or his minister-in-charge.

1-2 A visit from a Brahmana is like the entry of fire into the house. It has to be quenched (controlled) or it will burn the house down.

The Brahmana in this context refers to one who possesses all the qualities of a true Brahmana, that is, nobility, culture, learning, purity and righteous conduct. It does not refer to a Brahmana by birth, as we may understand it.

3-4 As fire is quenched with water, so also the idea conveyed here by this custom is that the fiery guest can be comforted or satisfied by giving him water to drink.

Nachiketas's austere refusal to have the refreshment offered is simply to indicate the preparation needed before going to one's Guru. It does not have to be taken too deeply.

For the same reason, it is absurd to debate how Nachiketas arrived at the abode of Yama. The point is that he thirsted so intensely for knowledge that it brought him to the most qualified person to give it to him – Lord Yama himself.

The young Nachiketas proved to be single-minded and unflinching in his devotion!

The womenfolk were worried about the consequences of not having treated their guest well. They addressed Yama about it…

1.1.8: ***Consequences of Inadvertence***

आशाप्रतीक्षे संगतँ सूनृतां
चेष्टापूर्ते पुत्रपशूँश्च सर्वान् ।
एतद्वृङ्क्ते पुरुषस्याल्पमेधसो
यस्यानश्नन्वसति ब्राह्मणो गृहे ॥ १.१.८॥

āśāpratīkṣē saṁgataṁ sūnṛtāṁ
cēṣṭāpūrtē putrapaśūṁśca sarvān |
ētadvṛṅktē puruṣasyālpamēdhasō
yasyānaśnanvasati brāhmaṇō gṛhē || 1.1.8||

1	*Aashaa prateekshe,* *sangatam soonritaam*	*"Hopes and expectations and merits gained* *in good company & their friendly discourses;*
2	*cha ishtaa-poorte,* *putra-pashoon cha sarvaan;*	*the beneficial results of sacrifices & pious gifts* *such as having sons and many cattle – all*
3	*etad vringkte* *purushasya alpa-medhasah*	*these are destroyed, nullified,* *in the case of the ignorant man*
4	*yasya anashnan grihe* *vasati braahmanah.*	*in whose house, without taking food,* *a Brahmana stays as a guest."*

The serious consequences of inadvertence in hospitality are pointed out. Hosts have so much to lose by not taking proper care of a Brahmana guest as laid down in scriptures.

1 ***Aashaa Prateekshe***: Here the context of the "*hopes and expectations*" is of something personal that one desires to get when serving a saint, such as heaven or acquiring merit or material wealth, good relationships, etc. Through nurturing good company and listening to the talks of the wise, such wishes are fulfilled.

2 ***Putra-Pashoon***: The favourable results mentioned above are listed here. Sons and domestic animals were high on the list of "wealth" in those days. Today it would be luxury homes and German automobiles, and gifts such as holiday tours with all expenses paid!

3 ***Alpa Medhasah***: Those who overlook their responsibilities of attending properly to learned and saintly guests are referred to in the Shrutis as "dull-witted with little sense". They lose a great opportunity to earn merit through serving holy men who come to them as guests.

4 ***Brahmanah***: Swami Chinmayanandaji suggests that *Katha Upanishad* may here be "considered as indulging in Brahmana-propaganda in the sense in which we understand Brahmanas today as a special privileged class."

And Lord Yama, who was the very embodiment of such adherence to propriety, would not brook any excuse. He does not justify himself, saying that he was out of town. He accepts full responsibility for the inadvertence, even in his absence, in hosting his guest.

Therefore, with the humility of one who has erred, he pleads with Nachiketas to overlook his fault…

1.1.9: ***Lord Yama Offers Justice***

तिस्रो रात्रीर्यदवात्सीर्गृहे मे-
ऽनश्नन् ब्रह्मन्नतिथिर्नमस्यः ।
नमस्तेऽस्तु ब्रह्मन् स्वस्ति मेऽस्तु
तस्मात्प्रति त्रीन्वरान्वृणीष्व ॥ १.१.९॥

tisrō rātrīryadavātsīrgr̥hē mē-
:'naśnan brahmannatithirnamasyaḥ |
namastē:'stu brahman svasti mē:'stu
tasmātprati trīnvarānvr̥ṇīṣva || 1.1.9||

		Yama, now addressing Nachiketas:
1	*Tisrah raatrih yat avaatseeh grihe me*	*"As you have dwelt three nights in my house*
2	*anashnan Brahman atithih namasyah;*	*without food, O venerable Brahmana guest,*
3	*namah te astu Brahman svasti me astu*	*I beg of you, O Brahmana, be good to me.*
4	*tasmaat prati treen varaan vrineeshva.*	*Hence, in return, please choose three boons.*

This verse is a reflection of the spirit of the great Aryan tradition. Not only in hospitality but in all other sectors of life, there was this nobility of spirit which did not see age, status or learning, etc, as a barrier to express honest modesty. Here, none other than the Lord of Death himself becomes supplicant to a mere boy of nine years age.

1-4 Lord Yama takes the oversight in hospitality very seriously. He is prepared to offer three boons to Nachiketas, one for each day that the boy had been made to fast outside his doors. It is not so much to make good the bad Karma which he and his family accrued, but to provide a just settlement to the boy whom he had offended; one may even add to the boy who already suffered the injustice of coming to him so soon.

One can expect this order of perfection from Lord Yama. It is adherence to Dharma that qualified him in the first place for this high post as Lord of Death.

THE FIRST BOON

And so, Nachiketas asks his boons one by one. Lord Yama has given young Nachiketas three blank cheques. What does the boy do with them?

He thinks of his family first – the suffering of his *father*, the anguish in his mind of having had to lose his son in a fit of rage. Then he thinks of the welfare of others, his *community*, through gaining merit for them to go to higher worlds after death. And thirdly, he rises even higher than that and seeks *liberation* – to go beyond all sorrow, beyond birth and death, to that realm for which Lord Yama alone is the most perfect teacher.

1.1.10: ***Boon 1: "Forgive my Father"***

शान्तसंकल्पः सुमना यथा स्याद्
वीतमन्युर्गौतमो माऽभि मृत्यो ।
त्वत्प्रसृष्टं माऽभिवदेत्प्रतीत
एतत् त्रयाणां प्रथमं वरं वृणे ॥ १.१.१०॥

śāntasaṁkalpaḥ sumanā yathā syād
vītamanyurgautamō mā:'bhi mr̥tyō |
tvatprasr̥ṣṭaṁ mā:'bhivadētpratīta
ētat trayāṇāṁ prathamaṁ varaṁ vr̥ṇē || 1.1.10||

		Nachiketas says to Lord Yama:
1	*Shaanta-sankalpah sumanaa yathaa syaad*	*"May he be pacified, and may he be kindly disposed.*
2	*veeta-manyuh gautamah maa abhi mrityo;*	*Free from anger may Gautama, my father, be towards me, O Lord of Death.*
3	*tvat prasrishtam maa abhivadet prateeta*	*When I am sent back to him by you, may he greet me and recognize me.*
4	*etat trayaanaam prathamam varam vrine.*	*This is the first of the three boons that I choose."*

1 With no thought of anything for himself, Nachiketas asks for his father's emotional pain to be relieved, for he did feel great regret at what he had done.

2 Nachiketas asks for a restoration in his relationship with his father. The anger felt by the father should be completely forgotten.

3 He also asks indirectly to be released and returned to Earth by asking for his father to recognize him as his son and not as a ghost returning from another world! He wishes to feel his father's love once more.

4 Indeed, he makes quite a job of including so many things in his first boon – a very tactful request that covers everything regarding his relationship with his father.

1.1.11: ***Yama Grants the First Boon***

यथा पुरस्ताद् भविता प्रतीत
औद्दालकिरारुणिर्मत्प्रसृष्टः ।
सुखँ रात्रीः शयिता वीतमन्युः
त्वां ददृशिवान्मृत्युमुखात् प्रमुक्तम् ॥ १.१.११॥

yathā purastād bhavitā pratīta
auddālakirāruṇirmatprasr̥ṣṭaḥ |
sukhaṁ rātrīḥ śayitā vītamanyuḥ
tvāṁ dadr̥śivānmr̥tyumukhāt pramuktam || 1.1.11||

		Lord Yama says to Nachiketas:
1	*Yathaa purastaat bhavitaa prateeta*	*Just as before (with love and affection), you will be recognized and received by him,*
2	*Auddaalakih Aarunih mat prasrishtah;*	*O Auddalaki-Aruni (Nachiketas), when you are released from me.*
3	*sukham raatreeh shayitaa veeta-manyuh tvaam*	*He will have nights of peaceful sleep once again, and be free of anger towards you*
4	*dadrishivaan mrityu mukhaat pramuktam.*	*when he sees that from the 'Jaws of Death' you have been freed."*

1-4 Granted – all the requests made in 1.1.10 are met by Yama. In every detail Lord Yama grants each aspect of the boon, in letter and in spirit.

In addition, he also adds something special to it: ***Raatreeh***, "*for many a night*", implies that his father will *live long* and happily henceforth. Yama indirectly promises that never again will there be an occasion for him to lose his temper and face such drastic consequences. Thus Yama goes the "extra mile" in granting the boon.

THE SECOND BOON

1.1.12: ***The Joys of Heavenly Worlds***

स्वर्गे लोके न भयं किंचनास्ति
न तत्र त्वं न जरया बिभेति ।
उभे तीर्त्वाऽशनायापिपासे
शोकातिगो मोदते स्वर्गलोके ॥ १.१.१२॥

svargē lōkē na bhayaṁ kiṁcanāsti
na tatra tvaṁ na jarayā bibhēti |
ubhē tīrtvā:'śanāyāpipāsē
śōkātigō mōdatē svargalōkē || 1.1.12||

		Nachiketas says to Lord Yama:
1	*Svarge loke na bhayam kinchana asti*	*"In heaven there is no fear whatsoever.*
2	*na tatra tvam na jarayaa bibheti;*	*You are not there, so old age brings no fear.*
3	*ubhe teertvaa ashanaayaa pipaase*	*Having crossed both hunger and thirst,*
4	*shokaatigah modate svarga loke.*	*being free from such grief, one rejoices there.*

Nachiketas introduces the reason here for asking his second boon in the next verse.

1-2 ***Jarayaa***: "*old age*"; this is an Upa-Lakshana for all the *Shadbhirogis*: "*the six afflictions*" – namely, birth, growth, maturity, decay, old age and death – none of which afflict the residents of heaven, so there is no fear of death there. Yama has no work there.

3-4 As there is no hunger and thirst either, there can be no grief in heaven, and one can enjoy uninterrupted pleasure there, without having to work! Heavenly pleasure is greatly sought after by earth-dwellers. It has all the pleasures of earth without any of their disadvantages. People are given a long life there to enjoy all the heavenly pleasures.

There is no old age, no diseases, no hospital bills – a heaven, indeed! However, it also comes to an end. When all the merits earned are exhausted, one has to return to earth.

Nachiketas is interested in the heavenly worlds because the majority of people on earth desire to go there. He wants to assist his people back on Earth to attain them.

1.1.13: ***Boon 2: "Heavenly Worlds for My People"***

स त्वमग्निँ स्वर्ग्यमध्येषि मृत्यो
प्रब्रूहि त्वँ श्रद्दधानाय मह्यम् ।
स्वर्गलोका अमृतत्वं भजन्त
एतद् द्वितीयेन वृणे वरेण ॥ १.१.१३॥

sa tvamagniṁ svargyamadhyēṣi mr̥tyō
prabrūhi tvaṁ śraddadhānāya mahyam |
svargalōkā amr̥tatvaṁ bhajanta
ētad dvitīyēna vr̥ṇē varēṇa || 1.1.13||

1	*Sah tvam agnim svargyam adhyeshi mrityo*	*"Thou knowest that fire sacrifice which leads one to Heaven, O Yama;*
2	*prabroohi tam shradda-dhaanaaya mahyam;*	*Explain that to me, who am possessed of the faith to deserve this knowledge,*
3	*svarga-lokaah amritatvam bhajante*	*that by which those desirous of attaining heaven may attain immortality there.*
4	*etat dviteeyena vrine varena.*	*I pray for this knowledge as my second boon."*

This boon is for the sake of Nachiketas's people, not for him.

1-4 Nachiketas is interested in knowing how one may attain those worlds where the life is free from all the sorrows known on Earth. He wishes to use this knowledge to raise the sights of his people a bit – even if only temporarily – so that they have some relief from their sufferings.

There are various performances of rites and rituals specified in the Karma Kanda of the Vedas by which people having these desires may get them fulfilled legitimately. The Vedas contain all varieties of knowledge, including the lower or Apara Vidya by which one can obtain fulfillment of their selfish desires. This is permitted with the hope that sooner or later the performer of these rites will realize that even these pleasures have an end. Then he will naturally seek the higher knowledge to grow further. It is part of the Vedic plan.

1.1.14: ***Yama Grants the Second Boon***

प्र ते ब्रवीमि तदु मे निबोध
स्वर्ग्यमग्निं नचिकेतः प्रजानन् ।
अनन्तलोकाप्तिमथो प्रतिष्ठां
विद्धि त्वमेतं निहितं गुहायाम् ॥ १.१.१४॥

pra tē bravīmi tadu mē nibōdha
svargyamagniṁ nacikētaḥ prajānan |
anantalōkāptimathō pratiṣṭhāṁ
viddhi tvamētaṁ nihitaṁ guhāyām || 1.1.14||

		Lord Yama says to Nachiketas:
1	*Pra te braveemi tad u me nibodha*	*"I will gladly tell it to thee; you must learn it well from me.*
2	*svargyam agnim nachiketah prajaanan;*	*The fire sacrifice that leads one to heaven – O Nachiketas, I am well versed in it.*
3	*ananta lokaaptim atho pratishthaam*	*It is the means to attain 'eternal' heaven; and it is also the support of the Universe.*
4	*viddhi tvam etam nihitam guhaayaam.*	*You should know that knowledge to be seated in the 'hidden cave' of the intellect (of the enlightened ones).*

1 Lord Yama is ready to impart this knowledge to Nachiketas, for he sees in him the determination and the ability to grasp it for the good of others.

2 ***Svargyam***: Heaven, as understood in Indian scriptures, consists of various Lokas or worlds to which one goes after death. The qualification for it is to earn the merit to gain entry into the world of one's desire. These worlds are of different types, but their essential common feature is the enjoyment of pleasures of an extraordinary type.

3 The highest among these is Hiranyagarbha Loka or Brahmaloka. This is called 'eternal' here only relative to all the lower heavenly worlds. It is not absolutly eternal.

Beyond Brahmaloka is the Unmanifest, Causal state of the universe when it goes into cosmic dissolution. Beyond even this is the unconditioned Absolute Brahman.

4 The Upanishad really wishes to direct our attention to this last mentioned state, but it has to do so gently, not to confuse people. In this line, the Absolute state is hinted at as being in the 'hidden cave' of the intellect of enlightened sages. Lord Yama says that the desire as well as the means to attain such worlds is established in this 'cave'.

1.1.15: ***Detailed Knowledge is Taught***

लोकादिमग्निं तमुवाच तस्मै
या इष्टका यावतीर्वा यथा वा ।
स चापि तत्प्रत्यवदद्यथोक्तं
अथास्य मृत्युः पुनरेवाह तुष्टः ॥ १.१.१५॥

lōkādimagniṁ tamuvāca tasmai
yā iṣṭakā yāvatīrvā yathā vā |
sa cāpi tatpratyavadadyathōktaṁ
athāsya mr̥tyuḥ punarēvāha tuṣṭaḥ || 1.1.15||

1	*Lokaadim agnim tam uvaacha tasmai*	*The Source of the Worlds, the Fire Sacrifice, was then explained to him (to Nachiketas);*
2	*yaah ishtakaah yaavateeh vaa yathaa vaa;*	*(Yama explained) the class of bricks are to be used, how many and how they are to be placed.*
3	*sah cha api tat pratyavadat yatha uktam*	*He (Nachiketas) then actually repeated verbatim everything as it was explained!*
4	*atha asya mrityuh punah eva aaha tushtah.*	*Then Yama, being highly pleased at this, added more to what he had already said:*

1 The perfect sacrifice is explained by Yama. From it arises all that exists in the universe. Mastering it, one gains mastery over any field of human activity, and acquires whatever one desires in terms of worldly prosperity and power. However, it is all within the transitory realm; all gains here would be impermanent.

2 The very *physical* details explained here of the sacrificial altar give us some idea as to the nature of what these attainments are really worth. Any secular field of knowledge – such as engineering, accounting, physics, chemistry, medicine, etc – require an enormous amount of numerical calculations due to the physical nature of the subject concerned. The empirical field requires mostly such type of knowledge of physical matter.

That is the significance of *bricks* in this line. Bricks and brick arrangements are what matter. The greatest comforts in this world are obtained by bringing together varieties of "bricks" in the right proportions and arrangements. All that Science produces eventually turns out to be a re-arrangement of materials found in nature.

Wars are fought on the same basis. Enormous efforts are made to put together the *artillery* of war – tanks, gunboats, fighter aircraft, machine guns, ammunition, etc. When sufficient numbers of these are assembled and managed, worldly dominance is gained over other less equipped nations. Political power boils down to merely a game of numbers and votes. The stronger country is the more *equipped* country, not the more *righteous* country.

Heaven for most people is where such power and material comforts are found in abundance, preferably without having to raise a finger! Such is the concept of heaven that attracts people towards them. It is covetable only because of the abundance of such ordinary desires. People who are satisfied by desires need look no further than Vedic rituals to obtain them. They have no interest in spirituality to raise themselves beyond this level.

3-4 Nachiketas very attentively listened to all this information and was able to understand it as well as repeat it verbatim. Yama was greatly pleased with Nachiketas. He was prepared to grant him a special bonus boon.

Why would Yama have been so delighted over such a feat of Nachiketas? We have here the first hint that behind his apparent generosity with regard to such knowledge, he was really jealously guarding something else that was too valuable to give away. To give away worldly knowledge is a very simple matter for Yama; it is of trivial value to him. He can afford to give any amount of bonuses in this regard. It will keep people in his "business of Death" for ever!

1.1.16: ***An Additional Bonus is Thrown In!***

तमब्रवीत् प्रीयमाणो महात्मा
वरं तवेहाद्य ददामि भूयः ।
तवैव नाम्ना भविताऽयमग्निः
सृङ्कां चेमामनेकरूपां गृहाण ॥ १.१.१६॥

tamabravīt prīyamāṇō mahātmā
varaṁ tavēhādya dadāmi bhūyaḥ |
tavaiva nāmnā bhavitā:'yamagniḥ
sr̥ṅkāṁ cēmāmanēkarūpāṁ gr̥hāṇa || 1.1.16||

1	*Tam abravit preeyamaanah mahaatmaa*	*To him (Nachiketas) said Lord Yama, that high-souled one, feeling delighted:*
2	*varam tava iha adya dadaami bhooyah;*	*"Out of favour towards you, now I grant you again another boon.*
3	*tava eva naamnaa bhavitaa ayam agnih*	*By your name, indeed, will henceforth be known this fire sacrifice.*
4	*srinkaam cha imam aneka roopaam grihaana.*	*And… you can have this necklace as well which has multiple colours!*

1-2 There is a tone of irony in this entire verse. Yama is not truly delighted, but just happy to get away so lightly with such a boon which he knows to be quite trivial. Being 'high-souled' tells us that he really has something much more precious to give. This he will not part with as easily as he parts with secular knowledge. He will guard it very jealously. Yama thus distracts Nachiketas from this secret treasure of his.

3 The name of Nachiketas is perpetuated. It is all that a man seeking name and fame would want on earth. He is being given them without his asking. It teaches us that name and fame are obtained not by running after them but by concentrated and intelligent effort.

4 Yama shows here his keen sense of the dramatic. Nachiketas is congratulated and honoured with a beautiful jewelled necklace. The ease of obtaining name and fame in comparison with spiritual treasures for which one has to strive hard, is brought out intentionally and with striking contrast.

Any venture of a material nature, such as the construction of a suspension bridge, requires minute attention to details. Certain prescribed methods are to be adhered to if success is desired. Such is the case with the Fire sacrifice that is explained in the next verse.

1.1.17: ***The Fruits of Sacrificial Fire Worship***

त्रिणाचिकेतस्त्रिभिरेत्य सन्धिं
त्रिकर्मकृत्तरति जन्ममृत्यू ।
ब्रह्मजज्ञं देवमीड्यं विदित्वा
निचाय्येमाँ शान्तिमत्यन्तमेति ॥ १.१.१७॥

triṇācikētastribhirētya sandhiṁ
trikarmakṛttarati janmamṛtyū |
brahmajajñaṁ dēvamīḍyaṁ viditvā
nicāyyēmāṁ̆ śāntimatyantamēti || 1.1.17||

1	*Tri-naachiketah tri-bhih etya sandhim*	*Yama: "One who does the 'Nachiketas Fire' three times; who gets connected with the 'three';*
2	*tri-karma-krit tarati janma-mrityoo;*	*and who undertakes the three kinds of work – he crosses or overcomes birth and death.*
3	*brahmaja-jnam devam eedyam viditvaa*	*The omniscient Fire (i.e. the world) born of Brahman, which is bright and adorable, when one understands*
4	*nichaayya imam shaantim atyantam eti.*	*and realizes the fruits (of this sacrificial Fire), then he attains everlasting peace (the heavenly worlds).*

In this verse the Phala or fruit of Fire sacrifices is being given. This accords with the normal Upanishadic style, and the description of the sacrifice may read like a riddle today.

1-2 The number '3' plays an important role in these rites and rituals.

i) Trinachiketah: This can be taken to mean two things:
a. One who has performed the 'Nachiketas Fire' three times; or,
b. One who studies it, who possesses knowledge of it, and who performs it.

ii) Tribhih Sandhim: "*Connection with the Three*" could have these three meanings:
a. The three influences on a person – mother, father and Guru;
b. The three means of knowledge – direct perception, inference and the scriptures.
c. Sri Shankaracharyaji's meaning – Vedas, Smritis and the utterances of the wise;

Whichever meaning one takes, the idea is that there has to be some authoritative source of information used in executing any project to achieve something.

iii) Trikarmakrit: One who undertakes the three kinds of Karma enjoined upon every Brahmana householder – a. Yajna (sacrifice); b. Dana (charity); and c. Tapas (austerity such as the chanting of the Vedas).

3 ***Brahmaja-jnam***: Firstly, ***Brahmaja*** means "*born of Brahman*", i.e. the sacrificial Fire which is born from Brahman; Brahmaja-Jnam would then mean "*the knower of such a Fire*". Fire could represent the world, which is born from Brahman. There is another name for sacrificial Fire used in the Vedas – it is "*Jaatavedah*".

In Indian culture all knowledge is respected. A person who has mastered the knowledge of sacrificial Fire is adored and respected for his knowledge in this field.

4 This fruit does not refer to God-realisation, but to the attainment of heavenly worlds as taught in the Upasana Kanda. The peace of mind enjoyed is relative, not absolute. Heaven is more peaceful than Earth. This is the level of the peace being described.

1.1.18: ***Glorification of Sacrificial Fire Worship***

त्रिणाचिकेतस्त्रयमेतद्विदित्वा
य एवं विद्वाँश्चिनुते नाचिकेतम् ।
स मृत्युपाशान् पुरतः प्रणोद्य
शोकातिगो मोदते स्वर्गलोके ॥ १.१.१८॥

triṇācikētastrayamētadviditvā
ya ēvaṁ vidvāṁścinutē nācikētam |
sa mr̥tyupāśān puratah̩ praṇōdya
śōkātigō mōdatē svargalōkē || 1.1.18||

1	*Tri-naachiketah trayam etat viditvaa*	*Yama: "The threefold Nachiketas Sacrifice,etc – the one who knows these (the above-named) '**Three**',*
2	*yah evam vidvaan chinute naachiketam;*	*if such a knowledgable one performs the Nachiketa Sacrifice,*
3	*sah mrityu-paashaan puratah pranodya*	*he throws off the chains of Death even before death itself;*
4	*shokaatigah modate svarga-loke.*	*having crossed over all sorrow, he rejoices in heaven.*

1-2 The science of Fire sacrifices named after Nachiketas is here being eulogized by Lord Yama both to glorify the boy and to glorify its performance as a form of ritualistic worship and an Upasana. Although it does not represent the highest spiritual science which liberates man, yet it is a positive start in that direction. Hence it is glorified.

3 This claim of crossing 'death' while still in one's body is usually reserved in Upanishadic literature to the state of Jivanmukti or Liberation while living. In the context of the Nachiketas Sacrifice, it would mean overcoming the fear of 'death' and the accompanying mental anguish by attaining the heavenly worlds where there is no body and hence no death. Hence, 'throwing off death' refers to the bodiless existence in heaven.

4 The claim made of crossing over all sorrow is another aspect of the same attainment. It refers to the dense sorrows of a gross material existence on earth, which is absent in heaven. It does not refer to the deeper freedom from sorrow which is removed only through spiritual knowledge. The former type of sorrow can be removed by Upasana combined with rituals like the 'Nachiketas Fire Sacrifice', which lead one heaven.

Nevertheless, it is an important canon in Vedantic philosophy that this also leads to the ultimate release from sorrow but by the process of Krama Mukti or gradual liberation. In this method, the theory is that the devotee first attains the heavenly region of Brahmaloka, where he is instructed by the Lord Brahma Himself in the knowledge that liberates him completely from birth and death, i.e. the equivalent of Jivanmukti or Liberation.

The Karma Kanda is not *anti-Jnana*; it is just *pro-Ajnana*. In contrast, the Jnana Kanda is directly in opposition to Ajnana, of which it is the opposite. Jnana and Ajnana cannot co-exist, as they are like light and darkness.

The stage is now set for asking for Knowledge of the Self (Atma Jnana). This will be the "Boon of Heroism" that has made Nachiketas so famous in all Upanishadic lore.

THE THIRD BOON

The moment is most appropriate for Nachiketas to ask his third boon. Nachiketas has been waiting for this – the moment that promises to usher in the **Knowledge** that he seeks. There is palpable feeling of expectancy in his heart. He knows he is standing on the threshold of an immense change in his life.

1.1.19: ***Yama Invites the Third Boon***

एष तेऽग्निर्नचिकेतः स्वर्ग्यो
यमवृणीथा द्वितीयेन वरेण ।
एतमग्निं तवैव प्रवक्ष्यन्ति जनासः
तृतीयं वरं नचिकेतो वृणीष्व ॥ १.१.१९॥

ēṣa tē:'gnirnacikētaḥ svargyō
yamavṛṇīthā dvitīyēna varēṇa |
ētamagniṁ tavaiva pravakṣyanti janāsaḥ
tṛtīyaṁ varaṁ nacikētō vṛṇīṣva || 1.1.19||

1	*Eshah te agnih nachiketah svargyah*	*Yama: "This then is the '**Nachiketas Fire Sacrifice**', which leads one to Heaven, (O Nachiketas);*
2	*yam avrineethaah dviteeyena varena;*	*and which you had chosen as your second boon.*
3	*etam agnim tava eva pravakshyanti janaasah*	*Hereafter, people will call this Fire by your name alone.*
4	*triteeyam varam nachiketah vrineeshva.*	*Now your third boon, O Nachiketas, you may choose!"*

1-3 The second boon is brought to a conclusion in the first three lines. There seems to be no need to devote three lines to conclude the second boon, as it has already been well concluded in the previous verse. However, they do have a dramatic effect. They have the effect of drawing open the curtains as in a live drama, ushering in a new scene.

And drama it certainly is. The step from the second boon to the third boon is so significant that it may called dramatic: It represents the change from Apara Vidya to Para Vidya, from secular concerns to the spiritual quest, from the Unreality to the Reality, the most significant shift in life. We are moving into a whole new dimension to discover the Ultimate Reality. To spend three lines on creating the dramatic effect of welcoming the new topic cannot be considered to be lavish.

4 Two conditions need to be fulfilled for Nachiketas to ask the particular boon that would most satisfy his spiritual thirst. They are:

i) ***The Guru's Grace***: The knowledge is only given when the Guru is pleased with one's service. It cannot be had otherwise. Nachiketas has so far pleased Yama in every respect.

ii) ***The Guru's Realisation***: In addition, Self-knowledge can only be asked from someone who possesses it. Who would be more conversant with this subject than the Lord of Death himself?

Nachiketas is now all fired up with the desire for the highest realm – the state of total liberation from Samsara which means oneness with the supreme Brahman. This requires completely different qualifications from those required for the earlier Karma Kanda rituals or the Upasana Kanda meditations. Here the main quality required is total *Dispassion*, which is extremely difficult for human beings to possess. It is also very rare to see one so young as Nachiketas reaching out to attain this state of ultimate spiritual enlightenment. This is a moment of history for humanity!

Dispassion is not anti-love, nor is it pro-love. It is not concerned with relative love. It is love for the Highest. The third boon is about fulfilling this desire for the Supreme.

With the next verse, we enter into the Upanishad proper. The serious, spiritual side of it begins to unfold. Up to this point, we have been building up a dramatic scene which has led the disciple to arrive at the feet of his Master. Now the crucial boon is asked . . .

1.1.20: ***Boon 3: "Self-Knowledge for Me"***

येयं प्रेते विचिकित्सा मनुष्ये-
ऽस्तीत्येके नायमस्तीति चैके ।
एतद्विद्यामनुशिष्टस्त्वयाऽहं
वराणामेष वरस्तृतीयः ॥ १.१.२०॥

yēyaṁ prētē vicikitsā manuṣyē-
:'stītyēkē nāyamastīti caikē |
ētadvidyāmanuśiṣṭastvayā:'haṁ
varāṇāmēṣa varastṛtīyaḥ || 1.1.20||

		Nachiketas says to Yama:
1	*Yaa iyam prete vichikitsaa manushye*	*"This doubt that arises, consequent on the death of a man –*
2	*asti iti eke ayam na asti iti cha eke;*	*some say 'It exists' and others say 'It does not exist' –*
3	*etat vidyaam anushishtah tvayaa aham*	*this (doubt) wishing to clarify it, I seek your direct instruction (due to your competence).*
4	*varaanaam eshah varah triteeyah.*	*Of all the boons (that are available for me to choose from), this is the one (that I have chosen as my)* ***third boon****."*

1 Among men there exists a huge doubt about the existence of the Spirit in man, and, if so, a greater doubt arises whether this Spirit is the same as the supreme, universal Spirit or Brahman. Only death can prove whether such an entity exists, but the dead person cannot report his finding to the living! Thus it is taken on faith or not accepted at all.

2 Mankind is split sharply into two distinct camps: those who believe that God exists and those who don't. Revolving around this uncertainty is the entire subject of religion among men. Believers and non-believers endlessly go on quarrelling with each other.

They even come to hate or distrust each other on this point. In the extreme case, men will even kill each other in religious strife, if they feel that the other is a threat to them. The Hindu-Muslim riots that partitioned India are a case in recent history. The Jews and the Muslims in Palestine/Israel is another case; Roman Catholics against Protestants is another.

3 ***Vidyaam***: "*I seek to know*". The knowledge that is asked for in this boon is very special for this important reason. As we shall see, it appears so innocently asked, yet it is the knowledge that can solve all religious strife; and resolve the mystery of this whole universe.

This is the doubt which Nachiketas wants to clear up, not out of curiosity but out of his genuine search for the Truth, a search for which he is willing to stake his all. He considers himself to be the disciple of Yama, and has so far proved very worthy.

Anushishtah Tvayaa: "*instructed directly by you*". There are many who may claim to know the secret about the existence of God. The majority teach it as a subject in school. They read up what has been said about God and then pass that "knowledge" on to others. Sadly, they themselves have no direct experience about what they teach to others.

4 Nachiketas is confident that Lord Yama must know about this secret from direct experience of it. Yama, more than anyone else, would be the most ideal teacher of this secret, for he deals with Death all the time, and is sure to know whether Spirit exists or not. Approaching the right person, Nachiketas has great hope of having his doubt cleared.

Lord Yama's Response

What remains to be seen is whether Lord Yama would be willing to part with this secret. If he is willing, what are the conditions the student has to fulfill to qualify to receive it? This is how the discussion proceeds from here onwards.

Lord Yama, who knows every thought that goes on in the minds of men, knows better than anyone that a sincere desire for God is rare on earth. As much as he would love to impart such knowledge to the seeker of Truth, he has to first check out the intensity of the demand made by Nachiketas. This is routine for Yama. Very few would pass the tests that Nachiketas now goes through to prove that he is worthy of receiving this knowledge.

1.1.21: ***Test 1: "It's Too Difficult For You!"***

देवैरत्रापि विचिकित्सितं पुरा
न हि सुविज्ञेयमणुरेष धर्मः ।
अन्यं वरं नचिकेतो वृणीष्व
मा मोपरोत्सीरति मा सृजैनम् ॥ १.१.२१॥

dēvairatrāpi vicikitsitaṁ purā
na hi suvijñēyamaṇurēṣa dharmaḥ |
anyaṁ varaṁ nacikētō vr̥ṇīṣva
mā mōparōtsīrati mā sr̥jainam || 1.1.21||

		Lord Yama says to Nachiketas:
1	*Devaih atra api vichikitsitam puraa*	*"With regard to this, even among the gods there have been doubts in days of yore;*
2	*na hi suvijneyam anuh eshah dharmah;*	*Verily, it is not easy to understand, for very subtle is this principle of the Self.*
3	*anyam varam nachiketah vrineeshva*	*For some other boon (that will befit your tender age), O Nachiketas, you may ask.*
4	*maa maa uparotseeh ati maa srija enam .*	*Do not, please do not press me on this matter; release me from this (demand that you are making)."*

The reluctance to impart precious wisdom and knowledge is being seen.

1 The first strategy Yama uses is to frighten away the seeker. Yama says that even the gods have entertained this doubt – and not just now, but throughout history, from the earliest of times. The suggestion here is that there is *no answer* to this question.

2 Next comes the second strategy. Yama moves on to saying how difficult it is to understand it. Even the gods cannot grasp it fully. What chance would a young boy like Nachiketas have of grasping it?

3-4 ***Maa Maa***: "*Do not, do not*". Thirdly, Yama employs the strategy of diverting Nachiketas' mind to something else, to some other boon. He urges Nachiketas not to press his demand for the "Great Secret" any further. Is Lord Yama simply evading the question? We shall see.

Nachiketas's reply to these words of Yama are surprisingly intelligent for a boy.

Even Secular Knowledge is Guarded

The strategies of jealously guarding knowledge is utiised on earth by wealthy tycoons who keep a close watch over the intellectuals in society. Their theory is that it is people with knowledge who pose the greatest threat to them. They keep a tight control over the educational system. Only that which will promote their philosophy of life is taught at the schools and colleges. They also see to it that historical records of previous social uprisings are doctored to remove facts which may reflect badly upon their own rule. Even religion is not spared, and sacred scriptures are re-written to suit their own political philosophy.

1.1.22: ***Response 1: All the More Determined***

देवैरत्रापि विचिकित्सितं किल
त्वं च मृत्यो यन्न सुज्ञेयमात्थ ।
वक्ता चास्य त्वादृगन्यो न लभ्यो
नान्यो वरस्तुल्य एतस्य कश्चित् ॥ १.१.२२॥

dēvairatrāpi vicikitsitaṁ kila
tvaṁ ca mr̥tyō yanna sujñēyamāttha |
vaktā cāsya tvādr̥ganyō na labhyō
nānyō varastulya ētasya kaścit || 1.1.22||

		Nachiketas says to Lord Yama:
1	*Devaih atra api vichikitsitam kila*	*Indeed, on this matter, even by the gods doubts have been entertained!*
2	*tvam cha mrityo yat na suvijneyam aattha;*	*You also say, O Death, that this principle is not truly comprehended with ease!*
3	*vaktaa cha asya tvaadrik anyah na labhyah*	*But, a teacher like you who can explain this – another such teacher I shall never find.*
4	*na anyah varah tulyah etasya kashchit.*	*(So, I have no option before me but this:) No other boon equal to this can there be (for me to choose)!*

The Brilliance of Nachiketas

Nachiketas emerges with sheer brilliance. He is so sincere as to not be put off by any fear. Yama's deterrents are all the more reason for him to stick stubbornly to this boon!

Nachiketas's words were paraphrased for us by Acharyaji himself, who rose in brilliant eloquence equal to the occasion:

1 "If the gods could not understand it, it is all the more reason why I would want to have this knowledge. Perhaps they did not have a teacher like you. *I have you*, so I have an advantage over them.

2 "And if it is so difficult to comprehend, it must be something very special indeed. I have come all the way to you from Earth; after such an effort it would be foolish of me if I asked for anything lesser. The lesser things can be got on earth itself, I need not have come here for them!

3 "If you are hinting that this is the knowledge that bestows liberation, it implies that the other knowledge asked for earlier (in boon two) will only get me some temporary pleasure but not liberation. So would you not like me to choose this knowledge instead of the other? Isn't this the knowledge that you should want me to learn?

4 "Putting all these reasons together, how can I waste such a golden opportunity to obtain this precious knowledge which cannot come to one in a hurry? Surely, judging from your own standard, this is the only boon worth having!"

The class was simply stunned into silence after this outpouring from Acharyaji. Our entire minds were raised, as it were, to Nachiketas's level.

1.1.23: ***Test 2: Limitless Wealth & Lordliness***

शतायुषः पुत्रपौत्रान्वृणीष्वा
बहून्पशून् हस्तिहिरण्यमश्वान् ।
भूमेर्महदायतनं वृणीष्व
स्वयं च जीव शरदो यावदिच्छसि ॥ १.१.२३॥

śatāyuṣaḥ putrapautrānvṛṇīṣvā
bahūnpaśūn hastihiraṇyamaśvān |
bhūmērmahadāyatanaṁ vṛṇīṣva
svayaṁ ca jīva śaradō yāvadicchasi || 1.1.23||

		Yama says to Nachiketas, by way of temptation:
1	*Shataayushah putra-pautraan vrineeshva*	*Guaranteed to be centenarians – such **sons** and grandsons you may choose;*
2	*bahoon pashoon hasti hiranyam ashvaan;*	*Choose **herds** and herds of cattle and elephants, any amount of gold, any number of horses;*
3	*bhoomeh mahat aayatanam vrineeshva*	*From this vast Earth (over which I rule), choose an **estate** of any size;*
4	*svayam cha jeeva sharadah yaavat icchhasi.*	*and for yourself a **long life** consisting of as many autumns (years) as you like.*

Yama now tries tempting the boy through material comforts and lordliness – things which are usually looked upon as very covetable; as the best security in this world.

1 ***Domestic Security***: Yama offers a nice big **family**, with many children who would live for long, and thereby maintain his fame for decades to come. Unimaginable *domestic security* is offered to Nachiketas.

2 ***Material Security***: Yama offers any amount of **wealth** in terms of possessions. Such are the things which most people seek and ask for in their prayers to the Lord daily. In those days wealth was measured in terms of cattle, elephants and horses; in addition to gold and gemstones. This represents.

3 ***Property Security***: Yama, the Ruler over the whole of Earth, offers **lordliness** in abundance. Nachiketas could own a huge estate if he chooses to. He would have all the *property security* needed.

4 ***Life Security***: Yama nbow throws into the bargain something which only a life insurance company will find displeasing! He assures Nachiketas a **long life**; he promises not to snatch him prematurely away from this earth-plane. He will come only when Nachiketas reaches a ripe old age. A full life-span is guaranteed to him – who will not be pleased with such an offer?

Yama waits eagerly to see how Nachiketas would respond to all these tempting offers. Nachiketas does not bat even an eyelid – he seems to have no interest in them. Is it possible for so young a boy, at the threshold of life and faced with a dream future, to be so indifferent to it? Yama can hardly believe that such heroic boys can exist on earth.

He now pulls out his trump-card to shake off the idea from Nachiketas's mind . . .

1.1.24: ***Test 3: Power & Enjoyership Added***

एतत्तुल्यं यदि मन्यसे वरं
वृणीष्व वित्तं चिरजीविकां च ।
महाभूमौ नचिकेतस्त्वमेधि
कामानां त्वा कामभाजं करोमि ॥ १.१.२४॥

ētattulyaṁ yadi manyasē varaṁ
vr̥ṇīṣva vittaṁ cirajīvikāṁ ca |
mahābhūmau nacikētastvamēdhi
kāmānāṁ tvā kāmabhājaṁ karōmi || 1.1.24||

		Yama tempts Nachiketas a bit more:
1	*Etat tulyam yadi manyase varam*	*If equal to this (that I have already offered) you consider some other boon,*
2	*vrineeshva vittam chira-jeevikaam cha;*	*you only have to ask for it – wealth & property, and a long, healthy life (I have already offered).*
3	*mahaa-bhoomau nachiketah tvam edhih*	*(Now consider)* ***Kingship*** *over a vast territory on Earth, O Nachiketas – it can be yours for the asking;*
4	*kaamaanaam tvaa kaamabhaajam karomi.*	*I shall add to this unrestrained* ***enjoyership*** *of all that you may desire.*

1-2 It is possible, so thinks Yama, that Nachiketas has other desirable things in mind over and above what has already been offered to him. Yama wants to be sure that he has not left anything out. He himself comes forward with two more things which he has not yet offered, perhaps thinking that Nachiketas is not old enough yet to desire them:

3 ***Political Power*:** The first additional offer is that of **rulership** or kingship over people. Nachiketas is promised to be made the king of a vast region. This will not only give him access to enormous wealth and comforts, but also give him power over others. Political power is something which certain people crave for. It is difficult to resist this kind of power when it comes; and just as difficult to maintain it over a long period of time.

4 ***Pleasure***: The second offer is that of unrestrained **enjoyership**. The long life offered so far does not guarantee that; it has to be a long, *healthy* life. He will need to have very good health to enjoy the vast wealth he possesses. This is included in the revised offer.

There is still no interest shown by Nachiketas. With calm eyes revealing an awesome inner strength, Nachiketas simply fixes them firmly on Lord Yama, as though saying, "Nothing doing, Sir! I shall stick to my original boon."

Why is Lord Yama doing this to Nachiketas? Surely the little boy cannot be a threat to his own powerful position? Even if Nachiketas is too young for the Knowledge in Yama's estimation, does he really have to go to this extent to dislodge the desire from the stubborn boy's mind? How much more precaution has he to take to ensure that his student is worthy of the teaching he has asked for?

In the following verse, we see Lord Yama going *even further* in his effort to deflect the determined boy who stands before him, stubbornly demanding the ultimate knowledge.

1.1.25: ***Test 4*: Heavenly & Sexual Pleasures**

ये ये कामा दुर्लभा मर्त्यलोके
सर्वान् कामाँश्छन्दतः प्रार्थयस्व ।
इमा रामाः सरथाः सतूर्या
न हीदृशा लम्भनीया मनुष्यैः ।
आभिर्मत्प्रत्ताभिः परिचारयस्व
नचिकेतो मरणं माऽनुप्राक्षीः ॥ १.१.२५॥

yē yē kāmā durlabhā martyalōkē
sarvān kāmāṁśchandataḥ prārthayasva |
imā rāmāḥ sarathāḥ satūryā
na hīdṛśā lambhanīyā manuṣyaiḥ |
ābhirmatprattābhiḥ paricārayasva
nacikētō maraṇaṁ mā:'nuprākṣīḥ || 1.1.25||

		Yama presses Nachiketas to the limit:
1	*Ye ye kaamaah durlabhaah martya loke*	*Whatever **heavenly desires** are there which are too difficult to obtain in this world of mortals,*
2	*sarvaan kaamaan chhandatah praarthayasva;*	*all those desires, according to your fancy, you may ask for (any of these heavenly pleasures)!*
3	*imaah raamaah sarathaah satooryaah*	*Here are these **fair damsels** with chariots and musical instruments –*
4	*na hi eedrishaah lambha-neeyaah manushyaih.*	*of such (beauty) that are not indeed obtainable or enjoyable by mortals,*
5	*aabhih matprattaabhih parichaarayasva*	*I shall give them to you to be attended upon by them.*
6	*nachiketah maranam maa anu-praaksheeh.*	*Only, O Nachiketas, do not pursue this question about the Soul after death.*

Now Lord Yama goes to the very ultimate test that he is authorised to apply. What has he left out so far which may still be lurking in Nachiketas's mind as being unoffered?

1-2 ***Heavenly Pleasures***: When his attempts so far leave Nachiketas unmoved, the offer is stepped up to cover sensual pleasures such as are not obtainable on earth. On earth one has to strive to get what he desires. In that struggle there are many obstacles to be overcome. But in heaven there is no effort needed. The joys are boundless, their pleasure is limitless. Perhaps that may be on the mind of youmg Nachiketas. No, he solidly refuses it!

3-5 ***Sexual Pleasure***: Finding that even these extreme pleasures are having no effect on the boy, Yama plays his trump-card – 'fair damsels' who would entertain him! Yama in sheer desperation becomes recklessly oblivious of his guest's age! This is one offer that has unfailingly worked on everyone else. The most tantalizing, and therefore demoralizing, of all sensual objects is a beautiful woman. Yama's ultimate weapon is Maya!

Parichaarayasva: "*to attend upon you*". Acharyaji added some imagination into this word: A thought may have flashed in Yama's mind that perhaps Nachiketas is not accepting

these because he may doubt whether these women will obey him or have their own sweet way due to their pride! So he at once promises that they will 'attend upon' him. Not only that, but he will send them fully equipped with all chariots, etc, so they will not ask Nachiketas for them. They will give him no trouble at all, only pleasure – so thought Yama.

4 Yama's intention is simply to check out the *Vairagya Quotient* of his prospective disciple. The ever vigilant boy withstands the test with 100 marks out of 100!

Yama could test the boy no further. He had run out of all his tricks. His trump-card was '*woman*'. When even that failed on Nachiketas, the boy was now all his!

Here is how Nachiketas responded to Lord Yama's four tests.

1.1.26: ***Response 2: Hero Over the Senses***

श्वोभावा मर्त्यस्य यदन्तकैतत्
सर्वेंद्रियाणां जरयंति तेजः ।
अपि सर्वं जीवितमल्पमेव
तवैव वाहास्तव नृत्यगीते ॥ १.१.२६॥

śvōbhāvā martyasya yadantakaitat
sarvēṁdriyāṇāṁ jarayaṁti tējaḥ |
api sarvaṁ jīvitamalpamēva
tavaiva vāhāstava nr̥tyagītē || 1.1.26||

		Nachiketas replies to Lord Yama:
1	*Shvobhaavaah martasya yat antaka etat*	*Ephemeral (evanescent) and of mortal stuff is whatever there is here, O Lord of Death!*
2	*sarva indrayaanaam jarayanti tejah;*	*From all the sense organs of a man they wear out the vigour and vitality.*
3	*api sarvam jeevitam alpam eva*	*Besides, all creatures that have life in them, have a short life span indeed.*
4	*tava eva vaahaah tava nritya-geete.*	*Let the horses and chariots remain yours alone; let the dancing and singing (girls) remain with you.*

In Nachiketas, Yama was face to face with *Dispassion* itself in human form. Here was fertile soil that was well prepared for the seeds of Atma Jnana to be sown. Inwardly, Yama must have been thrilled to the core to note the intensity of the boy's Mumukshutwa. Nothing pleases a Guru more than to see a disciple of such a calibre. An ironsmith can work best with pliable red-hot iron, not cold, stiff, unresponsive steel!

1 ***Shvobhaavaa:*** This key word means "*ephemeral*". One to whom the world appears ephemeral, mortal and fluctuating, is ripe for the path of Para Vidya in Vedanta.

2 Sensual pleasures merely drain away one's vitality. They steal our wealth of vigour, memory, aspiration for God. They cause us to age rapidly; years are converted to weeks!

3 Yama has offered long life as a bait, but such is Nachiketas's discrimination that he considers even the longest life-span to be a waste of time if not utilized in the correct pursuit of the higher knowledge of the Self.

4 "No," is Nachiketas's final response to Yama's offers. "You can keep your damsels and all the other pleasures you are offering with you. I have no need for them; they will only wear out my vigour. I beg you to stick to my original request."

In the final three verses, we see in Nachiketas **wisdom** far beyond his years.

1.1.27: ***Response 3: Wealth & Long Life Need No Boon***

न वित्तेन तर्पणीयो मनुष्यो
लप्स्यामहे वित्तमद्राक्ष्म चेत्त्वा ।
जीविष्यामो यावदीशिष्यसि त्वं
वरस्तु मे वरणीयः स एव ॥ १.१.२७॥

na vittēna tarpaṇīyō manuṣyō
lapsyāmahē vittamadrākṣma cēttvā |
jīviṣyāmō yāvadīśiṣyasi tvaṁ
varastu mē varaṇīyaḥ sa ēva || 1.1.27||

		Nachiketas continues:
1	*Na vittena tarpaneeyah manushyah*	*Man cannot be satisfied with wealth alone.*
2	*lapsyaamahe vittam adraakshma chet tvaa;*	*I shall surely get all the wealth I need now that I have seen and met you.*
3	*jeevishyaamah yaavat eeshishyasi*	*I shall also remain alive for as long as you remain in power (as you are my friend).*
4	*varah tu me varaneeyah sah eva.*	*Hence, the boon that is worth praying for by me is '**That**' alone. (i.e. the one concerning the Self)*

The things offered by Yama can be had even without needing a boon to obtain them. They depend upon one's Prarabdha Karma. Nachiketas wisely wishes to spend his boons only on that which is not obtainable in any other way. Nachiketas turns out to be a good, shrewd businessman, too!

1.1.28: ***Response 4: Chooses Wisdom Over Folly***

अजीर्यताममृतानामुपेत्य
जीर्यन्मर्त्यः क्वधःस्थः प्रजानन् ।
अभिध्यायन् वर्णरतिप्रमोदान्
अतिदीर्घे जीविते को रमेत ॥ १.१.२८॥

ajīryatāmamṛtānāmupētya
jīryanmartyaḥ kvadhaḥsthaḥ prajānan |
abhidhyāyan varṇaratipramōdān
atidīrghē jīvitē kō ramēta || 1.1.28||

1	*Ajeeryataam amritaanaam upetya*	*The proximity of the undecaying immortals, have I reached.*
2	*jeeryam martyah kvadhah sthah prajaanan;*	*Being a perishable mortal myself, knowing well of existence on earth down below,*
3	*abhi-dhyaayan varnah ratih pramodaan*	*having seen the worthlessness of beauty and the enjoyments of love,*
4	*atideerghe jeevite kah rameta.*	*why will I rejoice in wanting an extended life-span?*

1 Having come all the way to the region of Yama, **2** who in his right senses will ask for the things of the lower earth region, **3** for which he has already developed intense dispassion? It will be foolish to accept that which one has positively renounced.

2 The word ***Kvadhahsthah*** has two meanings:
i) ***Ku-adha-sthah***: "*a dweller of earth,* which is *below* the heavenly regions"; or
ii) ***Kva-tadastha***: "*where one gets absorbed in evanescent things*".

3 ***Varna-rati-pramodan:*** "*taking delight in a variety of pleasures".* It is used here to cover the entire world of sensual pleasures with all its distractions, sense appeal and frivolousness. This is how Nachiketas sums up the Apsaras and their troupe of entertainers.

4 Why would one want a long life? Is it just to enjoy frivolous things? What a waste of a boon that would be!

Such is the mood of Nachiketas that everything Unreal is totally rejected. He has already unwittingly done the highest Vedantic negation. Such a ripe student can be rocketed into realisation immediately after Sravana.

1.1.29: ***Response 5: "I Stick to My Original Boon"!***

यस्मिन्निदं विचिकित्सन्ति मृत्यो
यत्साम्पराये महति ब्रूहि नस्तत् ।
योऽयं वरो गूढमनुप्रविष्टो
नान्यं तस्मान्नचिकेता वृणीते ॥ १.१.२९॥

yasminnidaṁ vicikitsanti mṛtyō
yatsāmparāyē mahati brūhi nastat |
yō:'yaṁ varō gūḍhamanupraviṣṭō
nānyaṁ tasmānnacikētā vṛṇītē || 1.1.29||

1	*Yasmin idam vichikit-santi mrityo*	*i) Of that (the existence of the Self) over which people entertain doubt, O Lord of Death;*
2	*yat saam-paraaye mahati broohi nah tat;*	*ii) Of that Great Beyond into which we pass – please tell me all about That.*
3	*yah ayam varah goodham anu-pravishtah*	*The boon I choose is about That Self, the knowledge of which has become mysterious.*
4	*na anyam tasmaat nachiketaa vrineete.*	*No boon other than that, therefore, do I, Nachiketas, desire to choose.*

1-4 Acharyaji gave us a fitting paraphrase of Nachiketas's final summation:

It is as if he is saying to Yama: “Why do you want me to remain at the lower level? Would you not like me to rise up, even if at great odds, and try for that which is really worth it among all human endeavours? Of course, you do. So, I will not be tempted – no matter how much you try. Do you really think I should be wasting my time just watching Apsaras dance before me? Do you not believe that I have other nobler things to do?”

Conclusion on Nachiketas’ Stance

Nachiketas does not budge from his iron resolve to spurn every temptation placed on his path to enlightenment or release from bondage to this world. His is a rare stance indeed. It is as if he is saying to Yama, “Why do you want me to change my stand? Do you think that I have not thought over this seriously enough? You are quite mistaken. I know how rare it is to ask for such a boon – very few are interested in it. Therefore this knowledge is not easily available to us on Earth. Knowing that, do you really believe I will waste my precious visit to you and ask you for something paltry that is available on earth? You are the right Person for me to ask this boon. Hence, this is the only boon I would ask for.”

Rare indeed is a soul of the Nachiketas temperament. He stood firm and beat Yama at his own game. Yama would indeed be proud of such a ripe disciple as Nachiketas. Only a Guru knows the joy of meeting a perfect disciple. Nachiketas is that perfect disciple to the perfect teacher.

॥ इति काठकोपनिषदि प्रथमाध्याये प्रथमा वल्ली ॥

|| iti kāṭhakōpaniṣadi prathamādhyāyē prathamā vallī ||

*****

Chapter 1.2: (25 verses)
THE CHOICE

THIS CHAPTER IS DOMINATED by a discussion on the choice that is available to men living in this world. At every moment man is free to make a choice between the two paths known as Preyas and Sreyas, the pleasant path and the good path. Lord Yama leads the discussion, following his satisfaction at seeing Nachiketas successfully pass his severe test in the last chapter.

Having tested the disciple, and found his fitness for knowledge, Lord Yama speaks the following words to Nachiketas:

PREYAS & SREYAS

1.2.1: ***The Choice Available to All Men***

अन्यच्छ्रेयोऽन्यदुतैव प्रेय-
स्ते उभे नानार्थे पुरुषँ सिनीतः ।
तयोः श्रेय आददानस्य साधु
भवति हीयतेऽर्थाद्य उ प्रेयो वृणीते ॥ १.२.१॥

anyacchrēyō:'nyadutaiva prēya-
stē ubhē nānārthē puruṣaṁ sinītaḥ |
tayōḥ śrēya ādadānasya sādhu
bhavati hīyatē:'rthādya u prēyō vr̥ṇītē || 1.2.1||

		Lord Yama said:
1	*Anyat shreyah anyat uta eva preyah te*	*One is preferable (good or Sreyas), while the other is pleasurable (pleasant or Preyas);*
2	*ubhe naanaa arthe purusham sineetah;*	*These two, serving divergent purposes, bind man.*
3	*tayoh shreyah aada-daanasya saadhu bhavati*	*Among these two, he that accepts the **preferable** becomes blessed.*
4	*heeyate arthaat yah u preyah vrineete.*	*Deviated from the true goal of life is he who selects the **pleasurable**.*

The Two Paths – Sreyas and Preyas

1 ***Preyas*** is that which is 'pleasurable', whilst ***Sreyas*** is that which is 'preferable'. These two are divergent paths presented before every person at every moment of his life.

One has constantly to choose between these two paths. There is a fork on the road ahead at every moment of the journey through Life.

2 ***Our Choice***: One has to *CHOOSE* between these two paths. That choice is one's own, for better or for worse. No one else is responsible for that choice. Every person builds his destiny by making this choice, moment to moment.

As we progress into this chapter we shall see more details of what differentiates the two paths.

3-4 Here in the introductory verse the end results are indicated for each path: The Sreyas Path leads one to the ultimate good; whereas the Preyas Path leads to one's downfall from the true purpose of life. The how and the why will follow.

At the outset we note that Yama does not use the words 'good' and 'bad' for the paths themselves, but only for the results in the light of the spiritual evolution of man. The good and bad are in the eyes of the person who chooses. In the eyes of most people Preyas is seen as 'good' and therefore gets chosen. The end results, however, are what count. Preyas, in terms of one's evolution towards a higher, nobler goal, definitely brings *bad* if not devastating results. It binds us endlessly in sorrow.

How this happens is the subject of this chapter. We shall also discuss the nature of the Self, insofar as it matters in making the correct choice of selecting the Path of Sreyas.

1.2.2: *Discrimination Between the Two*

श्रेयश्च प्रेयश्च मनुष्यमेतः
तौ सम्परीत्य विविनक्ति धीरः ।
श्रेयो हि धीरोऽभि प्रेयसो वृणीते
प्रेयो मन्दो योगक्षेमाद्वृणीते ॥ १.२.२॥

śrēyaśca prēyaśca manuṣyamētaḥ
tau samparītya vivinakti dhīraḥ |
śrēyō hi dhīrō:'bhi prēyasō vr̥ṇītē
prēyō mandō yōgakṣēmādvr̥ṇītē || 1.2.2||

1	*Shreyah cha preyah cha manushyam etah*	*The **preferable** and the **pleasurable** both approach the mortal man.*
2	*tau sam-pareetya vivinakti dheerah;*	*Having considered them from all sides, the man of intelligence separates the two.*
3	*shreyah hi dheerah preyasah abhi vrineete*	*The intelligent one selects the **electable** in preference to the **delectable**;*
4	*preyah mandah yoga kshemaat vrineete.*	*the non-intelligent one selects the delectable for the sake of growth and protection (of the body, etc.)*

Simile: Sreyas and Preyas – Like Two Visitors

The first and second verses of this chapter are excellent for "Goal-setting". Their message is "Choose your goal wisely. Keep it in view, and the means will follow by themselves. But lose sight of the goal, and you are totally lost, like a boat without a rudder."

1 This verse starts with a symbolic representation of the choice we are faced with from moment to moment. It is visualized that both Sreyas and Preyas are like two visitors who knock at our door at the same time. When we open the door, we are confronted by both, but we can allow only one to enter, not both. This is because they are "mutually exclusive". They cannot come together, they are divergent in their ways. We shall see more of that later.

Here it is sufficient to note that when we open our door, whom do we allow to enter? That is the big question facing *every person*, at *every moment*.

2 We also note that the factor that determines whom we allow to enter is our own ***Intelligence***. Choosing is always a function of the intellect, not the mind. If we allow the mind to choose, it will bring in its likes and dislikes and distort the choice.

The intellect will always take all factors into account before making a choice. It sees things from different angles, not just that of the ego. The latter will always see to its own interests first. The intellect will see what is good for all people concerned, and will always decide having the interest of one's ultimate goal in life at heart.

3 When the choice is made purely by the intellect, we would choose Sreyas. Lord Yama has a long-term perspective, intended for our ultimate good. The intelligent person who takes into account his ultimate good, chooses Sreyas.

4 The non-intelligent person (***Mandah***), looking only for short-term happiness, chooses Preyas. He allows his choice to be over-run by his mind. Selfish interests of the body and individual personality are permitted to sway the decision. The choice in this case is always Preyas. It cannot see the overall picture, but only the ego's perspective.

1.2.3: *Yama Praises Nachiketas's Discrimination*

स त्वं प्रियान्प्रियरूपांश्च कामान्
अभिध्यायन्नचिकेतोऽत्यस्राक्षीः ।
नैतां सृङ्कां वित्तमयीमवाप्तो
यस्यां मज्जन्ति बहवो मनुष्याः ॥ १.२.३॥

sa tvaṁ priyānpriyarūpāṁśca kāmān
abhidhyāyannacikētō:'tyasrākṣīḥ |
naitāṁ sr̥ṅkāṁ vittamayīmavāptō
yasyāṁ majjanti bahavō manuṣyāḥ || 1.2.3||

1	*Sah tvam priyaan priya-roopaan cha kaamaan*	*Such is your **stern spirit** that the pleasant in appearance and objects considered as desirable,*
2	*abhi-dhyaayan nachiketah atya-sraaksheeh;*	*after examining their true merits, O Nachiketas, you have renounced them.*
3	*na etaam srinkaam vittamayeem avaaptah*	*Considering them as mere chains, you have refused to accept this **'royal road of wealth'***
4	*yasyaam majjanti bahavah manushyaah.*	*on which get trapped and drowned the majority of mortal men.*

Overall Importance of This Verse

This is the verse wherein we truly find Nachiketas's heart and which crystallizes what the *Nachiketas spirit* is all about. In a world where few would appreciate heroes like this young lad for his brave spirit of renunciation, this verse is a strong reminder to us to take a leaf from his book – preferably the one containing this verse!

The praise comes from none other than the Lord of Death himself. He knows what is going on in this world better than anyone. It is his duty to take people away from Earth back to where they really belong. He would love to take them to high places, but then very few qualify for that. When an exceptional being like Nachiketas comes along, he almost gets treated as a rare species. This verse from Yama pays tribute to such a rare, noble soul.

The "Nachiketas Spirit"

1-2 Yama may well be saying, "Nachiketas, I showed you all the glitter there exists. You weighed their worth, and then simply renounced them. Most people would have grabbed what I offered and then asked for more such boons! But you were bold and strong enough morally not to yield to those temptations. I am proud of you, my boy, truly I am!"

3-4 Nachiketas rejected all wealth and pleasure on the grounds that he knew what they were. What does it mean to know something? Does it mean experiencing them? No, it cannot mean that – there are far too many things in the world to know them by experience.

Knowing a thing means knowing its limitations. The moment we know the limitations of a thing, we truly know it. We may experience a thing blindly many times and yet not know it in essence. In fact, most people repeatedly enjoy the same sensual pleasure, due to addiction to it, but have no idea of what it truly is. They still do not *know* it.

1.2.4: ***Vidya & Avidya = Sreyas & Preyas***

दूरमेते विपरीते विषूची
अविद्या या च विद्येति ज्ञाता ।
विद्याभीप्सिनं नचिकेतसं मन्ये
न त्वा कामा बहवोऽलोलुपन्त ॥ १.२.४॥

dūramētē viparītē viṣūcī
avidyā yā ca vidyēti jñātā |
vidyābhīpsinaṁ nacikētasaṁ manyē
na tvā kāmā bahavō:'lōlupanta || 1.2.4||

1	*Dooram ete vipareete vishoochee*	*Widely contradictory, and following divergent courses*
2	*Avidyaa yaa cha vidyaa iti jnaataa;*	*are that which is known as **Avidya** (ignorance) and that which is known as **Vidya** (knowledge)*
3	*vidyaa-bheepsinam nachiketasam manye*	*Being an aspirant for knowledge do I consider you to be, O Nachiketas,*
4	*na tvaa kaamaah bahavah alolupanta.*	*since none of the desirable things, enjoyable and multifarious though they be, could shake you.*

2 The terms **Vidya** and **Avidya** are introduced here for the two paths Sreyas and Preyas respectively. They mean 'the path of knowledge' and 'the path of ignorance'. For, the two paths are distinguished easily on the basis of knowledge. It is the knowledge which differentiates them.

1 That they are "widely divergent" can be seen in the following table, which clearly identifies the differences between Sreyas and Preyas:

No.	THE PATH OF SREYAS (Vidya)	THE PATH OF PREYAS (Avidya)
1	Preferable, Electable, Good	Pleasurable, Delectable, Pleasant
2	Path of Light	Path of Darkness
3	Spiritual path	Materialistic path
4	Based on Knowledge of Self – **VIDYA**	Based on Ignorance – **AVIDYA**
5	Needs Discrimination	Needs no discrimination
6	Requires a Sattwic intelligence	Due to Rajasic and Tamasic intelligence
7	Has a definite GOAL: Liberates one from Samsara; no more transmigration	Goal is enjoyment: Binds one further into Samsara; endless transmigration
8	Brings peace of mind, stillness	Brings restlessness of mind, anxiety
9	Long-term gain valued	Short-term gain valued
10	Turns mind inward into meditation	Turns mind outward to sense objects
11	The touchstone is **Renunciation**	The touchstone is **Indulgence**
12	Universalises the consciousness	Ego-centralises the consciousness

TABLE DIFFERENTIATING SREYAS AND PREYAS

As one can clearly notice, the two paths are widely divergent, leading to totally different goals. The path of knowledge leads to one's ultimate good; the path of ignorance leads to sorrow and misery. There is a *huge chasm* between the two paths.

3-4 Although Nachiketas was offered all the pleasures of the world as well as all the heavenly pleasures not obtainable on earth, he stood firmly in refusing them. He did not get deflected from the path of knowledge. Thus he proved himself to be the perfectly qualified student to receive the knowledge of the Self. His fitness for the spiritual path was found to be beyond any doubt. He was the ripe student to pursue the path that leads to enlightenment.

In Pujya Gurudev's words, Shankaracharya goes into an "*irrepressible outburst of applause*" for his student Nachiketas. [In the power of using words, it was often said that Shankaracharyaji's command over Samskrit was matched perfectly by Pujya Gurudev's command over English.]

The final analysis of Yama is that Nachiketas is high above the generality of man. Although young, he is readily accepted by Yama as the most eligible for this path of knowledge.

1.2.5: ***Preyas: Blind Leading the Blind***

अविद्यायामन्तरे वर्तमानाः
स्वयं धीराः पण्डितंमन्यमानाः ।
दन्द्रम्यमाणाः परियन्ति मूढा
अन्धेनैव नीयमाना यथान्धाः ॥ १.२.५॥

avidyāyāmantarē vartamānāḥ
svayaṁ dhīrāḥ paṇḍitaṁmanyamānāḥ |
dandramyamāṇāḥ pariyanti mūḍhā
andhēnaiva nīyamānā yathāndhāḥ || 1.2.5||

1	*Avidyaayaam antare vartamaanaah*	*In the midst of **Ignorance** – those people who live in this way,*
2	*svayam dheeraah panditam manya-maanaah;*	*think themselves to be very intelligent and fancy themselves to be highly learned.*
3	*dandramya-maanaah pariyanti moodhaah*	*Deluded in many crooked ways, the ignorant go round and round,*
4	*andhena eva neeyamaanaah yathaa andhaah.*	*even as those who are blind are led by others who are equally blind!*

Now in two verses, Yama shares with his disciple, Nachiketas, some of his observations of the irony that exists among those who live the path of Preyas, which is the majority of mankind. This is the life that Nachiketas has just saved himself from.

1 The entire standard of judgement is lop-sided. Everything in the world of Preyas is seen through the jaundiced eye of personal pleasure.

2 Yes, there are "wise" ones among them, too. Their wisdom consists in giving advice to people on how they can also become successful like themselves. They advise others to pursue pleasure, study for the sake of earning more, and enjoy as much as they can.

They utterly detest the spiritual path. Those who get high positions because of their wealth are regarded as the "Gurus" in society. They are given honour and respect for their material achievement just as a disciple would honour and respect his spiritual guide or Guru. The whole standard of assessing values is turned head-over-heels.

3-4 They go round in circles, following the crooked path of cheating and lying. And those that follow them join them in this merry-go-round! ***The blind lead the blind!***

If such people somehow stray into the spiritual field, what would they do but turn it into a business. The Divine becomes a means for them to ask for more wealth. Their prayers are only for greater and greater wealth. They pray for long life so that they can enjoy all the more. All the blessings they seek are only for furthering their pursuit of pleasure.

This verse may also be taken as a warning for those who wish to follow the path of Sreyas. It has to be "God for God's sake, not for any other selfish reason." Otherwise desire will enter on the sly even on the Sreyas path, and snatch people onto the side of Preyas if they are not alert. The syndicate of "wise men" among the Preyas clan simply waits for opportunities to snatch away intelligent ones wishing to lead a life of Sreyas.

1.2.6: ***Preyas: A False Vision***

न साम्परायः प्रतिभाति बालं
प्रमाद्यन्तं वित्तमोहेन मूढम् ।
अयं लोको नास्ति पर इति मानी
पुनः पुनर्वशमापद्यते मे ॥ १.२.६॥

na sāmparāyaḥ pratibhāti bālaṁ
pramādyantaṁ vittamōhēna mūḍham |
ayaṁ lōkō nāsti para iti mānī
punaḥ punarvaśamāpadyatē mē || 1.2.6||

1	*Na saam-paraayah prati-bhaati baalam*	*The means for the attainment of the '**long-term goal**' are not revealed to those who have a '**short-term goal**';*
2	*pramaadyantam vitta-mohena moodham;*	*nor to the ignorant who by wealth and the glamour accompanying it, are deluded.*
3	*ayam lokah na asti parah iti maanee*	*"Only this world, and none hereafter" – he who think in this manner,*
4	*punah punah vasham aapadyate me.*	*again and again he falls under my (Yama's) sway.*

1 ***Saamparaaya:*** "*scripturally approved means to attain the heavenly worlds*". Such knowledge is not taught to one who is short-sighted like a child.

Baalah: "a child". Child in this context refers to one who has a *short-term goal* and is not able to see the benefit of working towards the *long-term goal*. Children are attracted to the pleasure that comes immediately, not to that which takes time time in coming. If a child were shown a chocolate in one hand and a thousand-rupee note in the other, it would choose the chocolate which he knows can bring him immediate pleasure, and not the unfamiliar piece of 'paper', which he knows not and which brings its fruit in the future.

In addition, ***Baalah*** refers to a person who does not have the power to discriminate.

2 The rewards of Sreyas are long-term; impatient people cannot even see them, so they do not want it, and never get it. The word ***Pramaada*** comes up here, as in *Viveka Chudamani*. It means "*inadvertence*". Preyas-people are totally inadvertent as to their real well-being. Being attached to quick results and ephemeral objects, they are engulfed in the delusion of wealth which buys them instantly. Petty, paltry pleasures obtainable with money – drink, food and women – are all it takes to make them happy.

3 Devotees of Preyas believe strongly that what they see in this world is all that there is; they find no need to speculate on the existence of an invisible God. Let alone God, even heaven is out of the question for such people.

4 ***Punah Punah:*** *"again and again" i.e. "birth after birth".* These people, who have such a low vision of life, what fate befalls them? They get dragged into this earth-plane birth after birth, i.e. they have to repeatedly encounter Lord Yama or Death; they are always under the sway or control of Death.

THE GURU & DISCIPLE RELATIONSHIP

1.2.7: ***Wonder Teacher & Wonder Disciple***

श्रवणायापि बहुभिर्यो न लभ्यः
शृण्वन्तोऽपि बहवो यं न विद्युः ।
आश्चर्यो वक्ता कुशलोऽस्य लब्धा
आश्चर्यो ज्ञाता कुशलानुशिष्टः ॥ १.२.७॥

śravaṇāyāpi bahubhiryō na labhyaḥ
śr̥ṇvantō:'pi bahavō yaṁ na vidyuḥ |
āścaryō vaktā kuśalō:'sya labdhā
āścaryō jñātā kuśalānuśiṣṭaḥ || 1.2.7||

1	*Shravanaaya api bahubhih yah na labhyah*	*Even just for hearing of It, many find the Self to be unavailable to them;*
2	*shrunvantah api bahavah yam na vidyuh;*	*And if they do manage to hear of It, many cannot comprehend the meaning of the Self;*
3	*aashcharyah vaktaa kushalah asya labdhaa*	*It is a wonder to find that rare **expounder** (of the Selt) who is proficient to teach It well;*
4	*aashcharyah jnaataa kushala anu-shishtah.*	*it is also a wonder to find that rare **listener** (of the Self) who is proficient to grasp this teaching.*

A Teaching Hard to Obtain

1-2 Many may get the good fortune to go to listen to such a teacher, but even amongst them there would be one rare soul who actually gets touched by the teaching and seeks to advance.

Acharyaji told us humorously of many people who go to Vedanta lectures just to get away from their troublesome families. They sit in the back row and have a good sleep! Others come but their minds are so agitated that they cannot understand anything that is said. They, too, doze off midway through the talk, unable to connect with the teacher.

A Teacher & Disciple Hard to Obtain

3-4 ***Aascharya:*** "*awe-inspiring, a wonder*". In the midst of this pitiful situation, there arises one among millions who seeks to escape from this life of sense enslavement. He is so rare as to be a wonder in this world. A good, proficient Teacher who can teach about the Self is equally a wonder. Both are ***Kushalah***, rare and proficient.

Yama is amazed to have discovered one like Nachiketas, who really towers above the generality of mankind. Yama raises him aloft as an example of the rarity of spiritual aspiration in this world of materialism and sense pleasures.

In taking the true teacher and a true disciple as "Wonders", we have to be careful that these do not refer to outward signs. Pujya Gurudev describes it beautifully: "A teacher is not a wonder because of the length of his beard, or because he sleeps not, eats not or dresses not. Many aspirants have fallen into this mistake of judging the outer-show, only to find in the end inner hollowness!"

The Wonder Teacher is one who is both proficient in expressing himself to an audience of seekers, and also one who has experienced the Truth of the Self within him. The Wonder Disciple is he who has a genuine desire and thirst for God and God alone to find the ultimate fulfillment in his life.

1.2.8: ***Principles in Spiritual Teaching***

न नरेणावरेण प्रोक्त एष
सुविज्ञेयो बहुधा चिन्त्यमानः ।
अनन्यप्रोक्ते गतिरत्र नास्ति
अणीयान् ह्यतर्क्यमणुप्रमाणात् ॥ १.२.८॥

na narēṇāvarēṇa prōkta ēṣa
suvijñēyō bahudhā cintyamānaḥ |
ananyaprōktē gatiratra nāsti
aṇīyān hyatarkyamaṇupramāṇāt || 1.2.8||

1	*Na narena avarena proktah eshah*	*Not by an **inferior instructor** (who has not attained Brahman), can the Self be instructed; (if it is, it will not be)*
2	*suvi-jneyah bahudhaa chintya-maanah;*	*easily understood due to the many **conflicting ways** in which It is bound to be explained.*
3	*ananya prokte gatih atra na asti*	*But, when taught by one who sees **no Duality**, then no doubts and variations will arise.*
4	*aniyaan hi atarkyam anu-pramaanaat.*	*Indeed, It cannot be **argued** that It is subtler than the subtlest (for that has no end).*

This is one of the key verses in this chapter, and we give it special attention. Three key principles in spiritual teaching are conveyed in this verse. They are:

A. An Unqualified Teacher Cannot Succeed:

1-2 However learned and brilliant a speaker may be, if he is not spiritually elevated he cannot make any impression on his audience. He may entertain them, but he will not bring clarity in their minds about the spiritual Truth or the path. Clarity comes only from actual direct experience of the Truth of experiencing oneness with the Self.

Such a teacher is himself usually a man of Preyas, using his knowledge as a means to earn an income. It is a business for him to speak and earn wealth. His mind is really set only on this gain from the talks, not on the welfare of his listeners. How can such a person make an impression on people's hearts?

B. Self Can Be Taught From Non-Duality:

3 The true teacher is a Brahma-Nishtha Guru. He is acquainted with the scriptures well enough to assist other seekers in clearing their doubts. He is also well established in Brahman, the supreme consciousness – that is, he is a realized Master. For the case of a qualified teacher, the following four interpretations are given in the Shankara Bhashya of the words ***'Ananya Prokta'*** (a non-different teacher) and ***'Gatih'*** (the arising of doubts):

a) ***Teacher is one with Self:*** As given above already, the teacher is one who is 'non-different' from the Self. He has Aparoksha Jnana or direct experience of the Self. When such a person teaches, the student is left with no doubt as to whether the Self exists or not. He can see the Truth in the person speaking. No *Gatih* or doubts arise in the listener's mind.

b) ***The Teaching is About the Self:*** The non-different nature of the Self forms the subject matter, taught by the teacher who is one with It. The student is made to grasp the truth that this Self is really his true nature, that he is non-different from It. This teaching makes him convinced and there is no Gatih since there is no *other* knowledge besides it.

c) ***No Transmigration:*** The focus here is on Gatih. This word is taken to mean 'trans-migration' or the repeated cycle of births and deaths. When the Self is spoken of by a realized sage, the listener is left in no doubt, and the cause of rebirth is removed by the knowledge transmitted by the realized teacher.

d) ***No Non-Comprehension:*** Due to Samskrit Sandhee grammar rules, 'Prokte-Gatih' is a word combination that splits into the two words '*Prokta Agatih'*. This means 'non-comprehension'. The teacher's explanation leaves no room for not grasping it.

And so, Shankaracharyaji sees four facets of truth in the same set of words. These are not different interpretations, but different *facets*. All can be taken to be correct and applicable. Each facet indicates or emphasizes a particular aspect of the truth. A great teacher always integrates knowledge in this manner, rather than create controversy.

C. Truth is Beyond Argumentation:

4 The third principle is very important for students engaged in scriptural study. There are many varieties of thought patterns in spiritual philosophy. If one is not careful of one's foundations, he could be easily swayed by sophistry among the exponents of various philosophies. *Truth is not a football* for intellectual games to be played. Shankaracharyaji, through his vast experience, knows that better than most.

The Truth integrates, as Truth itself is integral. The teacher of Truth sees aspects of Truth in everything. Hence doubts do not arise when he teaches. In the hands of scholars the Self may have various interpretations. One may take it to be like the subtle atom. Another will come along and say it is subtler than that – it is like the proton. A third will cleverly present it as even subtler than that – it is an electron! And so on, in the hands of intellectuals, the Self becomes the ball in a football game.

This verse warns us against such teachers, the "puritanical logicians"! Acharyaji brilliantly put it in these words: *"*When the Srutis marry the teacher, the child born to them is *Pure Knowledge."*

Logic is only an instrument, like a knife. It can produce a thousand possibilities. That is not the purpose of our study. The intellect can cut, like a knife; what to cut it does not know. If we give it any problem it will work out a possible solution based on the parameters given to it. If it works within the limits or 'banks' of the scriptures, and does not overrun them, then alone can it be trusted.

The intellect cannot work on an unidentifiable, unknown or unknowable thing that has no qualities – such as the Self. It has no means to investigate the Self. The Self is beyond its realm of operation. To use the intellect well, we need to give it the right parameters of Dharma as per scriptural authority, and set it to work in that environment. Then it can be of enormous use in directing the course of our lives along the right channels.

1.2.9: ***The Exemplary Standard Set by Nachiketas***

नैषा तर्केण मतिरापनेया
प्रोक्तान्येनैव सुज्ञानाय प्रेष्ठ ।
यां त्वमापः सत्यधृतिर्बतासि
त्वादृङ्नो भूयान्नचिकेतः प्रष्टा ॥ १.२.९॥

naiṣā tarkēṇa matirāpanēyā
prōktānyēnaiva sujñānāya prēṣṭha |
yāṁ tvamāpaḥ satyadhṛtirbatāsi
tvādṛṅnō bhūyānnacikētaḥ praṣṭā || 1.2.9||

1	*Na eshaa tarkena matih aapaneyaa*	*Not through argumentation can this knowledge on the Self be attained.*
2	*proktaa anyena eva sujnaanaaya preshtha;*	*But when taught by the one who knows **Non-duality**, it leads to sound, thorough knowledge, O dearest!*
3	*yaam tvam aapah satya dhritih bataasi*	*You have obtained that wisdom, as you are already soundly fixed in the Truth.*
4	*tvaadrik na bhooyaat nachiketaah prashtaa.*	*May others approach me with questions in the same way as you have, O Nachiketas.*

The previous verse is well concluded in this verse. In the light of the possibilities for getting side-tracked into logic, Yama's praise for Nachiketas tantamounts to praise for the solid foundation given to us by the Vedas. ***Atma Vidya*** comes out trumps in these two verses. The student who resolves to adhere to scriptural authority is in safe hands.

1 ***Na Aapaneyaa Tarkena***: These words could be interpreted in two ways, and both could be taken as correct:

i) The standard meaning as given above is "*not attainable through argumentation*."

ii) By reading the words as "***Na Aa Apaneya Tarkena***" the Shankara Bhashya suggests the meaning can be taken as "*not to be destroyed through argumentation*." This meaning would also be valid. Argumentation certainly destroys whatever is gained from the hearing of the scriptures. Arguments are strongly discouraged in the study of Vedanta.

2 ***Proktaa Anyena***: This is the same person whom we have already described in **3** of the previous verse. He is the realized saint who "sees no differences", who is in Non-duality. Only when such a teacher teaches the Self, does the concept get firmly rooted in the student as sound knowledge.

3 This verse shows us how much of a concern it is to a spiritual teacher to ensure that his student has a firm foundation in the Truth. Once anchored to Truth, the student's boat will not be carried away by the storms of argumentation and logic which abound.

4 Nachiketas is further eulogized here – Yama expresses his wish that all students who come to him should be as ideal as Nachiketas. Praise for Nachiketas is praise for the Shrutis, since it is the Srutis that have made a Nachiketas possible.

The next two verses are related. The first, 1.2.10, quotes Lord Yama's own example when he was young. The second, 1.2.11, compares that with Nachiketas. In a way, the comparison brings out the greatness of *both*.

1.2.10: ***Yama's Attainment***

जानाम्यहं शेवधिरित्यनित्यं
न ह्यध्रुवैः प्राप्यते हि ध्रुवं तत् ।
ततो मया नाचिकेतश्चितोऽग्निः
अनित्यैर्द्रव्यैः प्राप्तवानस्मि नित्यम् ॥ १.२.१०॥

jānāmyahaṁ śēvadhirityanityaṁ
na hyadhruvaiḥ prāpyatē hi dhruvaṁ tat |
tatō mayā nācikētaścitō:'gniḥ
anityairdravyaiḥ prāptavānasmi nityam || 1.2.10||

1	*Jaanaami aham shevadhih iti anityam*	*I (Lord Yama) knew that this 'treasure' was **impermanent**,*
2	*na hi adhruvaih praapyate hi dhruvam tat;*	*for the rule is: "Never through impermanent things is that permanent entity attained."*
3	*tatah mayaa naachiketah chitah agnih*	*Yet, by me has the "Nachiketas Fire" been propitiated or piled up*
4	*anityaih dravyaih praapta-vaan asmi nityam.*	*with impermanent things, and so I have attained the relatively "eternal" heavenly abode (as Lord Yama).*

Yama's Early Spiritual Course

1 In this verse, Lord Yama speaks openly of his own weakness relative to Nachiketas's greatness. He reveals that early in his life he did have the desire for empty, worldly pursuits, even though he was aware that they were temporary.

2 He was also fully aware of the principle that *impermanent means* could not be used to attain *permanent ends*. To attain the Supreme Brahman, renunciation could not be escaped. One has to renounce in order to attain the highest. He knew that very well.

3 However, in spite of knowing this, he (Lord Yama) was still attracted by the comforts of the heavens of Hiranyagarbha, for which he performed the Nachiketas Fire.

4 This fire is in the realm of Samsara; it brings only temporary rewards such as a trip to the heavenly, 'eternal' regions. Yama realized how temporary that was. It was after making such a poor start to his spiritual life, that he realized the folly of his choice.

It then dawned upon him to strive to realize his identity with Brahman from where he was. But the procedure to do that in heaven is quite complex. He did succeed but he had to wait to reach Brahmaloka, receive instructions there from Brahmaji, and then get liberated. In Vedantic terms, Lord Yama had taken the **Krama Mukti** path to realisation.

However, bound inescapably by the Karmic result of the sacrifice he performed, he had to perform the function of the "Lord of Death" in the relative world. He could not escape this Karma.

1.2.11: ***Nachiketas's Attainment***

कामस्याप्तिं जगतः प्रतिष्ठां
क्रतोरानन्त्यमभयस्य पारम् ।
स्तोममहदुरुगायं प्रतिष्ठां दृष्ट्वा
धृत्या धीरो नचिकेतोऽत्यस्राक्षीः ॥ १.२.११॥

kāmasyāptiṁ jagataḥ pratiṣṭhāṁ
kratōrānantyamabhayasya pāram |
stōmamahadurugāyaṁ pratiṣṭhāṁ dṛṣṭvā
dhṛtyā dhīrō nacikētō:'tyasrākṣīḥ || 1.2.11||

1	*Kaamasya aaptim jagatah pratishthaam*	*The fulfillment of desire is the foundation of the **World (Jagat)**.*
2	*kratoh aanantyam abhayasya paaram;*	*The endless rewards of sacrifices are the other shore of fearlessness (the **Heavens**),*
3	*stoma-mahat urugaayam pratishthaam drishtvaa*	*the great covetable sphere of **Hiranyagarbha**. Having examined all these,*
4	*dhrityaa dheerah nachiketah ati-asraaksheeh.*	*O Nachiketas, being full of wisdom and firm resolve, you have rejected them all!*

Nachiketas's Direct Path to Realisation

In contrast to Yama's route, Nachiketas has chosen from the very outset to follow the path of Renunciation while still living on earth, which will take him straight to liberation.

1 He is able to abandon the path of Desire merely by using his pure discrimination, without having to experience those desires. We all know how difficult that is, for Desire is the support of this perishable world.

2 Besides this, Nachiketas also steers himself free of all heavenly attractions. He does not take the Krama Mukti route as did Lord Yama. Although heavenly pleasures in the realms of **Hiranyagarbha** are so intensely attractive, yet they are rejected by him since they bring only temporary happiness. Nachiketas is looking for a happiness that is permanent.

3 The "endless rewards" and the "fearlessness" mentioned in the verse have to be interpreted as relative states. Whatever is within the realm of *Hiranyagarbha* can only be desire-based and relative. Absolute fearlessness is attained only in the Supreme Brahman.

4 Yama compares his weakness with the strength displayed by Nachiketas, who was able to resist the temptation of material pleasures so determinedly without breaking. In Yama's eyes, Nachiketas's qualities far exceed his own.

The Greatness of Both Yama & Nachiketas

For Lord Yama to speak so openly about his own weakness to his own disciple speaks volumes of the kind of trust, and openness of character he possessed. It is this sterling quality that is possessed by those who realise Brahman. We see in Lord Yama the qualities of true leadership when he recognizes the greatness of his disciple. There is no jealousy, only the highest praise. Yama actually gets carried away in his praise of Nachiketas, who has to remind Yama of his *third boon* in a very direct manner yet again a little later.

1.2.12: ***The Means to the Supreme Self***

तं दुर्दर्शं गूढमनुप्रविष्टं
गुहाहितं गह्वरेष्ठं पुराणम् ।
अध्यात्मयोगाधिगमेन देवं
मत्वा धीरो हर्षशोकौ जहाति ॥ १.२.१२॥

taṁ durdarśaṁ gūḍhamanupraviṣṭaṁ
guhāhitaṁ gahvarēṣṭhaṁ purāṇam |
adhyātmayōgādhigamēna dēvaṁ
matvā dhīrō harṣaśōkau jahāti || 1.2.12||

1	*Tam door-darsham goodham anupravishtam*	*The Self is difficult to see, and is lodged in an inaccessible place.*
2	*guhaahitam gahvareshtham puraanam;*	*It is 'located' in the intellect, and there it is seated amidst misery since time immemorial.*
3	*adhyaatma yoga adhigamena devam*	*By means of the science of the inner Self, the Supreme Deity within is meditated upon.*
4	*matvaa dheerah harsha shokau jahaati.*	*The wise man who recognises (That Supreme Being), comes to renounce both joys and sorrows.*

The Shankara Bhashya describes Nachiketas in these words: *"O Nachiketas, what an unsurpassable quality you are endowed with!"* Nachiketas represents Tivra Mumukshutva, i.e. yearning for God at the highest level, with the greatest intensity.

Yama now drifts along the perimeter of the answer to Nachiketas's third boon, but not until he is reminded of it again, does he actually start imparting that knowledge.

In this and the next verse, Yama begins to introduce some idea of the means to attain the Goal. The spiritual Sadhana for attaining the Goal is just touched upon in this verse. It beautifully singles out the role of the **intellect**, based on the spiritual science heard from the teacher. Once the spiritual purpose of life is understood, the intellect can be put to its rightful use in extricating our mind from the world and attaching it to the Self within.

Key Principles of Sadhana:

1 ***The Self is Inaccessibly Lodged:*** This description of where to find the Self tells us that it is something which is always there but is intangible to the senses and mind. By using expressions like '*difficult to see*', '*lodged*', '*located*', '*seated*' and '*inaccessible*', the idea is conveyed that the Self is something real even though it cannot be perceived through the senses and mind. It needs the "*Eye of Intuition*" to see the Self. The line indicates the subtle nature of the Self.

2 ***Guhaahitam***: Figurative speech is used here to give a location for that which is all-pervasive. The Self is thought of as a 'living being' dwelling within a 'cave' deep within our inner being. The cave represents the *intellect*. It is hidden very deep inside us. This is a very common simile used in the Upanishads for the 'location' of the Self within.

Gahvareshtham: The conditions surrounding the Self are now described. It is said to be in the "*midst of misery*", since It is really infinite, yet is experienced as being finite; It is

really free and unbound, yet is experienced in a state of bondage to the body, senses, mind and intellect. To be in such a restricted state must surely feel like being in prison. Hence, there is the misery felt by the Self.

We remind ourselves that the Self is being given these human attributes just for us to get some basic idea of It. We are not speaking here of the "indestructible, changeless, all-pervasive and attributeless Brahman". That will come later. Now we are simply getting aquainted with the Self and developing a feel for the spiritual knowledge that Yama is about to begin imparting.

Puraanam: "*the Ancient*", "*from time immemorial*". It is bad enough to be in prison; it is worse to be left there in oblivion to rot! The 'rotting' of the Self is now being brought out. It has been obscured from our experience over such a long period spanning many births, that Its obscurity has made It seem unreachable, neglected, forgotten and left to rot. The misery of being in prison is multiplied by the misery of being forgotten.

3 ***Adhyaatma Yoga***: There is a scientific means to realize the Self. This means is summarised by ***Adhigamena***, which refers to the process of meditation on the Self. Since the meditation is on the Self, the Self is referred to as a ***Deva*** or '*Deity*' being worshipped during meditation. The intellect is repeatedly brought to a focus on the inner Being. The process is well-known as just meditation, or sometimes as transcendental meditation.

4 ***Matvaa***: When thus "*recognized*" in deep meditation, the ***Dheerah*** or wise man, has one more condition to fulfill – he has to free himself from all likes and dislikes, joys and sorrows. A balanced state of mind is needed before he can begin earnest meditation.

1.2.13: ***Details of the Sadhana Process***

एतच्छ्रुत्वा सम्परिगृह्य मर्त्यः
प्रवृह्य धर्म्यमणुमेतमाप्य ।
स मोदते मोदनीयँ हि लब्ध्वा
विवृतँ सद्म नचिकेतसं मन्ये ॥ १.२.१३॥

ētacchrutvā samparigr̥hya martyaḥ
pravr̥hya dharmyamaṇumētamāpya |
sa mōdatē mōdanīyaṁ hi labdhvā
vivr̥taṁ sadma nacikētasaṁ manyē || 1.2.13||

1	*Etat shrutvaa sam-parigrihya martyah*	*After hearing this and getting a sound intellectual grasp of the Self, a mortal being*
2	*pravrihya dharmyam anum etam aapya;*	*abstracts the Self (from the body, etc) by discrimination, and attains the subtle Self.*
3	*sah modate modaneeyam hi labdhvaa*	*He then rejoices, for he has obtained the very cause of all joy.*
4	*vivritam sadma nachiketasam manye.*	*The abode of Brahman would be wide open, I think, for one like you, O Nachiketas.*

Yama summarises the spiritual journey ahead in these words. The overview of the Sadhana given in the previous verse is studded with a few more details along the pathway.

1 ***Shrutvaa***: The stage of *Sravana* or hearing the Truth from one's Guru, is mentioned first. Then the stage of Manana is mentioned, which aims to get a firm grasp of the knowledge of the Self. By these two, a mortal being gets a solid foundation to assist him in his Sadhana thereafter.

2 ***Pravrihya***: Sravana and Manana is followed by Nididhyasana, during which the de-superimposition process or abstraction of the Self is begun. The teaching that the body and mind are not our real Self is put to the test by intellectually separating oneself from them. One has to live by the principles learnt in Sravana and Manana. When this is done in every detail and the de-superimposition is thoroughly completed, the Sadhaka gets his first glimpses of his true spiritual nature.

3 ***Modate***: Upon realization, the Sadhaka rejoices because he discovers the Self which is the ***Modaneeyam*** or the very "*Cause of all Delight*".

4 At this point, Yama cannot help heaping more praise upon Nachiketas, as he sees in him the most qualified person to plunge into this path. Lord Yama was apparently getting carried away by the virtues he saw in his exceptional student. Has he forgotten about the third boon?

1.2.14: ***Boon 3: A Reminder Re-Phrased***

अन्यत्र धर्मादन्यत्राधर्मादन्यत्रास्मात्कृताकृतात् ।
अन्यत्र भूताच्च भव्याच्च यत्तत्पश्यसि तद्वद ॥ १.२.१४॥

anyatra dharmādanyatrādharmādanyatrāsmātkr̥tākr̥tāt |
anyatra bhūtācca bhavyācca yattatpaśyasi tadvada || 1.2.14||

		Nachiketas says to Lord Yama:
1	*Anyatra dharmaat anyatra adharmaat*	*Other than virtue and other than vice;*
2	*anyatra asmaat krita akritaat;*	*other than cause and effect;*
3	*anyatra bhootaat cha bhavyaat cha*	*other than the past and the future –*
4	*yat tat pashyasi tat vada.*	*tell me of that thing as you see It.*

Nachiketas indirectly reminds Yama of the boon. His interruption here seems to be saying to Yama: "It is very well for you to praise me, but that will not help me reach the Self. Please tell me about the Self in detail, not just an overview of It."

He rephrases it as though he wants to disguise his reminder! Nachiketas's single-mindedness and focus on what he wants is exemplary – especially now when he has been praised to the hilt by none other than Lord Yama himself. He has the singleness of purpose to ignore all the praise and gets straight to his point.

The re-phrasing of the boon takes the form of three aspects of the Truth:

1 ***Different from Dharma and Adharma***: This may be interpreted as virtue and vice; or as Paapa and Punya (merit and demerit), for that is the purpose for which most people follow Dharma; or as the known and the unknown, since to follow Dharma one has to first know what it is.

Nachiketas is aware that Dharma and Adharma (as well as the other two pairs mentioned in the verse) are concerned with Duality. Different from it would be Non-duality.

2 ***Different from Krita and Akrita***: This is taken to mean the cause and effect; or literally it could mean the created and the uncreated. The cause here is the Unmanifest or Hiranyagarbha; the Self is beyond this, it is the Causeless Cause.

3 ***Different from Bhuta and Bhavya***: It is beyond the past and the future. For something to exist only in the present means it must be beyond time. It is in the eternal present, the NOW.

4 All three expressions, or pairs, direct our minds to something beyond anything that has an empirical existence, i.e. to Non-duality. That is what Nachiketas would like to know more about, and only Yama can tell him what that is.

The original boon asked directly about what exists after death, implying what is it that exists besides the gross body and the subtle body equipment? The re-phrased version here asks indirectly about the same Truth – i.e. it asks what is beyond the pairs of opposites which govern the body and mind levels. What is beyond Dharma and Adharma, beyond Causation (cause and effect) and beyond Time (past and future)? This points to the Self.

"OM" UPASANA

1.2.15: ***The Goal of All Spiritual Efforts – "OM"***

सर्वे वेदा यत्पदमामनन्ति
तपांसि सर्वाणि च यद्वदन्ति ।
यदिच्छन्तो ब्रह्मचर्यं चरन्ति
तत्ते पदं संग्रहेण ब्रवीम्योमित्येतत् ॥ १.२.१५॥

sarvē vēdā yatpadamāmananti
tapāṁsi sarvāṇi ca yadvadanti |
yadicchantō brahmacaryaṁ caranti
tattē padaṁ saṁgrahēṇa bravīmyōmityētat || 1.2.15||

		Yama says to Nachiketas:
1	*Sarve vedaah yat padam aamananti*	*That which all the Vedas speak of as the Goal;*
2	*tapaamsi sarvaani cha yat vadanti;*	*and which by all penances or acts of austerity is also proclaimed;*
3	*yat icchhantah brahma-charyam charanti*	*and wishing for which people practice Brahmacharya;*
4	*tat te padam sangrahena braveemi:*	*that Goal to thee I will briefly declare:*
5	*Om iti etat.*	*It is "OM".*

4-5 Lord Yama answers Nachiketas's re-phrased boon directly by stating what the answer is, without giving any explanation. This is the briefest possible answer – OM.

The first approach to this Truth is via a symbol that has been unanimously accepted by the enlightened Rishis of the Vedic period as being OM, written as "ॐ".

Yama is providing an answer to the boon in the briefest manner. Under the symbol ॐ is found every possible detail in the scriptures of the path that leads to the Self. It is a perfect point to begin.

The symbol Om is used in three different contexts, as given in this verse in its first three Padas. These may be considered to be three more ways of expressing the same boon. In any case, it is the way Yama has understood the boon to be:

1 ***Used widely in all the Vedas:*** Its use has scriptural authority. It is an accepted symbol for the Truth. Everyone will understand what is meant when the sound symbol OM is referred to.

2 ***The Objective of All Tapas or Austerity:*** People perform many kinds of austerity, undergoing great hardship. However, the meditation upon Om is said to cover all these forms of austerities whether one wishes to attain merit or spiritual evolution.

3 ***The Reason Why Brahmacharya or Celibacy is Observed***: The greatest of all austerities is the vow of Brahmacharya, because it is the most difficult. There are two types of people who observe Brahmacharya: i) that observed by students of the Vedas during their period of study; or ii) the life-long observance of it for the purpose of making oneself fit to do the intense Sadhana to realize the Self. Conservation of energy for higher purposes is the principle behind this austerity.

4-5 The symbol OM stands for all these. It is a blanket term for all Upasanas directed towards a goal beyond the ordinary earth plane. This is explained further.

1.2.16: ***The Scope Covered by "Om"***

एतद्ध्येवाक्षरं ब्रह्म एतद्ध्येवाक्षरं परम् ।
एतद्ध्येवाक्षरं ज्ञात्वा यो यदिच्छति तस्य तत् ॥ १.२.१६॥

ētaddhyēvākṣaraṁ brahma ētaddhyēvākṣaraṁ param |
ētaddhyēvākṣaraṁ jñātvā yō yadicchati tasya tat || 1.2.16||

1	*Etat hi eva aksharam brahma*	*This word alone is verily the Saguna Brahman;*
2	*etat hi eva aksharam param;*	*This word alone is verily the Nirguna Brahman;*
3	*etat hi eva aksharam jnaatvaa*	*This word alone is verily that which is to be known*
4	*yah yat icchhati tasya tat.*	*in order to obtain whichever (of the two) one desires,.*

The scope of OM worship in its general form is given in this verse. "The higher world" means different things to different people according to the goal they desire. It ranges from the Saguna to the Nirguna, i.e. from the Brahman with form and attributes to that which is Formless and Attributeless.

1 In this Pada, Om is taken to mean the "inferior" or Saguna Brahman. This stands for Hiranyagarbha, who is at the helm of all the conditionings associated with Brahman. Hiranyagarbha is the 'Spout' or 'Womb' of Creation. All manifestation, gross and subtle, begin from Hiranyagarbha.

2 In this Pada, Om is taken to mean the "superior" or Nirguna Brahman. This represents the unconditioned Brahman, where there is no duality whatsoever.

This is the Goal which is strived for by the sages who are free of all attachments to this world of duality.

3 Om is meditated upon in two different ways in either of the above two aspects. In both cases, Om leads the worshipper or meditator to the goal he is striving for. The symbol Om thus stands for both wings of higher worlds, namely, that desired by Preyas-minded worshippers, as well as that desired by Sreyas-minded aspirants.

4 According to the goal one has in mind, so is the fruit of the worship – one goes to the plane of one's desire. Our intention determines what we attain. It is our intention which manifests as the fruit. The symbol Om is the means which takes us to that fruit.

This could mean any of many planes of existence in which one may enjoy the fruits of one's merits. These have been explained earlier in Chapter 1. However, for the aspirant who has no desire for any of these pleasures in heaven, the same Upasana, done with the intention of desiring liberation from the wheel of Samsara, obtains the highest fruit of oneness with the Supreme Self or Brahman.

Another division of Om worship is based on whether the worshipper uses the sound symbol OM, or the form of the letter "ॐ". The first is called "*Shabda Vachyam*" and the second is "*Shabda Pratikam*". Both of these are equally effective in application. One is based on name, and the other on form. Either of them can be used in Om meditation, for either attaining Saguna Brahman or attaining Nirguna Brahman.

1.2.17: ***A Eulogy of "Om"***

एतद् आलम्बनं श्रेष्ठम् , एतद् आलम्बनं परम् ।
एतद् आलम्बनं ज्ञात्वा , ब्रह्म–लोके महीयते ॥२.१७॥

ētadālambanaṁ śrēṣṭhamētadālambanaṁ param |
ētadālambanaṁ jñātvā brahmalōkē mahīyatē || 1.2.17||

1	*Etat aalambanam shreshtham*	*This (Om) is the best symbol;*
2	*etat aalambanam param;*	*This (Om) is the symbol for the highest;*
3	*etat aalambanam jnaatvaa*	*This (Om) is the symbol worth knowing;*
4	*brahma-loke maheeyate.*	*For he comes to be adored in the world of Brahma.*

1-3 Like most scriptures, the thing that is taken up under discussion is always praised as the best. This is done so as to instill the right faith in the mind of the student. He has to feel that what he is going to engage himself in is going to bring him the results promised most efficiently. Therefore, in this verse OM is given that supreme status.

4 Not only is the symbol praised, but it is also said here that one who does the worship of OM becomes worthy to be adored by all who are familiar with anything to do with the spiritual realm. Among devotees, the worshippers engaged in OM Upasana are recognized to be genuine seekers working towards their legitimate goal. There is a stamp of approval given to them through this verse. This is an important factor in ensuring that a person begins this worship with full confidence that the goal will be reached; that the reward will be received; that the effort will end in success.

SAANKHYA YOGA (as in Bhagavad Geeta)

The following two verses have been copied into the *Bhagavad Geeta* under "Saankhya Yoga" in Discourse 2. They fit well in the context of the Mahabharata war.

1.2.18: ***The Yoga of the Self***

न जायते म्रियते वा विपश्चिन्
नायं कुतश्चिन्न बभूव कश्चित् ।
अजो नित्यः शाश्वतोऽयं पुराणो
न हन्यते हन्यमाने शरीरे ॥ १.२.१८॥

na jāyatē mriyatē vā vipaścin
nāyaṁ kutaścinna babhūva kaścit |
ajō nityaḥ śāśvatō:'yaṁ purāṇō
na hanyatē hanyamānē śarīrē || 1.2.18||

1	*Na jaayate mriyate vaa vipaschit*	*The intelligent Self is neither born nor does It die.*
2	*na ayam kutashchit* *na babhoova kashchit;*	*It does not originate from anything,* *nor does anything originate from It.*
3	*ajah nityah shaashvatah* *ayam puraanah*	*It is birthless, eternal, undecaying,* *and it is ancient.*
4	*na hanyate hanyamaane shareere.*	*It is not killed even when the body is killed.*

We now begin the answer to the boon in terms independent of any symbol. This is the direct approach using first principles. Only the power of understanding of one's intellect is needed. This is considered to be the most efficient means of transmitting knowledge.

1 The words "*is neither born nor does It die*" are to be taken to refer to all the six Vikriyas, namely, birth, existence, growth, decay, old age and death. All these Vikriyas apply to the body only. Hence the Self is said here to be beyond the changing body.

2 The Self does not arise from anything different from It, nor does it produce anything different from It. It is beyond Causation; it is not a cause, nor does it produce an effect. Whatever appears different is a mere illusion, like water in a mirage. There is no Reality other than the Self.

3 The Self is that which always has been, always is, and always will be. This Pada is effectively stating the same thing as Pada **1**. There are no Vikriyas (modifications) in the Self.

This is because the Self is a totally different transactional plane from the world we know. When we see the Self, we do not see anything else. Everything is seen as the Self. One needs to shift to another level of consciousness to become aware of the Self. That is the key message Yama wishes to get across to his young disciple Nachiketas.

4 The last sentence directly answers Nachiketas' original phrasing of the boon: "Does It exist or not after the death of the body?" The answer is "Yes". From the angle of the Self, It alone exists, there is nothing else besides It. It is Non-dual.

1.2.19: ***What is Action & Inaction***

हन्ता चेन्मन्यते हन्तुँ हतश्चेन्मन्यते हतम् ।
उभौ तौ न विजानीतो नायँ हन्ति न हन्यते ॥ १.२.१९॥

hantā cēnmanyatē hantuṁ hataścēnmanyatē hatam |
ubhau tau na vijānītō nāyaṁ hanti na hanyatē || 1.2.19||

1	*Hantaa chet manyate hantum*	*If the killer thinks that he kills,*
2	*hatah chet manyate hatam;*	*and if the killed thinks that he is killed,*
3	*ubhau tau na vijaaneetah*	*both of them do not know the truth.*
4	*na ayam hanta na hanyate.*	*It does not kill, nor is It killed.*

In this verse the main point is to expound the doctrine of "Doership". In this doctrine, the spiritual view is that one is not the doer, whether acts or is acted upon.

["Killing" is only an example of an action; it should not be taken literally. Any action would suffice for the purpose of illustrating 'doership'. In the context of Nachiketas interviewing the Lord of Death, the example chosen is quite appropriate, albeit gruesome to sensitive readers. To prove a point the worst case is usually considered. The choice of an example of killing could have been for that reason. There is no greater pain we humans feel than the loss of someone through a killing, both physically and emotionally. Indifference in such an extreme case proves the point more dramatically than any other example.]

"Saankhya Yoga" as in the Geeta

1 The doer is defined as one who does an act. If one thinks that he is acting, then he takes on the role of 'doer'.

2 The doer is also one on whom an action is done. If one thinks that he is being acted upon, then he takes a share in the 'doing'.

3 In both cases, the role of doership is falsely taken on by the individual. It is not the individual who acts, not at all.

4 The real 'Doer' is the individual ego, who is the false "I". The Self, which is the true "I", is not the one who acts or is acted upon. The verse is written from the Self's viewpoint. A seeker has to remember this principle in all actions that he engages in.

The Self is ***untouched*** by whatever happens to the body, even if the worst possible thing happens, such as a gruesome slaying. In a spiritual sense, we are all ***"untouchables"***! Whatever happens to us in this world, our true Self remains unaffected, untouched.

If the hurting were only emotional and not physical, the simile would apply just the same. The Self is not touched even by emotion, meaning that the Self is not the mind also.

The Self may be compared to the space in a pot. Regardless of what happens to the pot, even if it is crushed to bits, the space occupied by it is not crushed at all. It goes on existing as before and simply merges with the outside space.

The Shankara Bhashya deduces from this verse that the knower of the Self has to be beyond virtue and vice, which can logically apply only to the relative plane of existence. Only from the perspective of the Self, there is neither virtue nor vice.

How is the Self to be known?...

1.2.20: ***Self-Knowledge – 1: Majesty of the Self***

अणोरणीयान्महतो महीया-
नात्माऽस्य जन्तोर्निहितो गुहायाम् ।
तमक्रतुः पश्यति वीतशोको
धातुप्रसादान्महिमानमात्मनः ॥ १.२.२०॥

aṇōraṇīyānmahatō mahīyā-
nātmā:'sya jantōrnihitō guhāyām |
tamakratuḥ paśyati vītaśōkō
dhātuprasādānmahimānamātmanaḥ || 1.2.20||

1	*Anoh aneeyaan mahato maheeyaan*	*The Self is subtler than the subtle and greater than the great;*
2	*aatmaa asya jantoh nihitah guhaayaam*	*The Self of every living creature is lodged in the "**Cave of the Heart**";*
3	*tam akratuh pashyati veeta shokah*	*A **desireless man** free from willing and wishing, becomes free from sorrow, and beholds,*
4	*dhaatuh prasaadaat mahimaanam aatmanah.*	*through the grace of a tranquil mind and calm senses, the glory and majesty of the inner Self.*

This is a favourite and much quoted verse among preachers and writers. It holds a full house of ideas that would make ornaments in the halls of Sadhakas.

Juxtaposition of Contradictions:

1 ***Anoh aneeyaan***: "*large and small*". The first sentence points to the fact that the Self is in another plane altogether, totally unlike the relative one that we know through our senses. Small and big do not feature in the realm of the Self. Size is not of any consequence to the Infinite. This is the Truth behind the apparent contradiction.

Acharyaji took great care to point out that the contradiction was not intended simply to blast our mind by placing in it two opposites side by side. No purpose is served by doing that. The intention here is to bring out the subtle quality of the Self. That is the purpose of using such a contradictory statement.

2 ***Nihitah Guhaayaam***: "*the core of our being*". To make that statement clearer, the Self is said to be lodged in the heart of every being. No size is referred to, but a Presence of Being, or an "I am-ness" is to be understood. Every creature feels certain that he exists. That sense of existence *is* the core of our heart. The pure existence of any being is entirely the Self. All else are only the walls of the 'cave'.

Desirelessness – the Essential Quality to Behold the Self:

3a ***Akratuh***: Why is "*desirelessness*" so essential for God-vision? Desire – any desire – has the effect of engaging our mind upon it. To the extent we are engaged in this way, we are distracted; we cannot be serene enough to focus on the Self. Only the desireless person can be serene enough to make his mind *vacant* for the experience of the Self. The term

'Kratu' refers to one who devotes himself to action to obtain a desire. Conversely, 'Akratu', refers to one who is actionless because he has no desire. He alone can behold the Self.

3b ***Veeta-Shokah***: *"freedom from sorrow".* This is the freedom one gets as a result of being desireless. The word used here is actually '*Veegata Shokah*', meaning "*sorrow that is well-gone*", that is, sorrow that is gone for good, never to return. This has far-reaching meaning, but in brief it is nothing short of the end of all **transmigration** of the soul into this trouble-ridden world which produces the sorrow. Liberation from all sorrow is the goal achieved when the mind is totally free from all desire.

4 ***Dhaatu-Prasad:*** This term is worthy of note. In this context, Dhatu means that which "holds the body together", that is, the subtle body, mainly the mind and senses. When the mind becomes tranquil, and senses become calm, serenity is the fruit or Prasad it confers upon us. Thus, the real blessing all are seeking comes from *our own mind*! We may, of course, seek the blessings of saints and holy men, but their blessings are directed towards conferring upon us the blessings of our own mind.

When this term is taken to refer to help from *outside,* there arises the *Doctrine of Grace*, which says that in the final analysis, God-realisation is due to the Lord's Grace alone. This is an interpretation favoured by Dualists. When it is taken to refer to help from *inside*, one speaks of the *Blessing of a Serene Mind*. This is favoured by Advaitins (Non-dualists).

1.2.21: ***Self-Knowledge – 2: Contradictions in the Self***

आसीनो दूरं व्रजति शयानो याति सर्वतः ।
कस्तं मदामदं देवं मदन्यो ज्ञातुमर्हति ॥ १.२.२१॥

āsīnō dūraṁ vrajati śayānō yāti sarvataḥ |
kastaṁ madāmadaṁ dēvaṁ madanyō jñātumarhati || 1.2.21||

1	*Aaseenah dooram vrajati*	*While sitting, It travels far away;*
2	*shayaanah yaati sarvatah;*	*while sleeping, It goes everywhere.*
3	*kah tam mada amadam devam*	*That God who rejoices and rejoices not – who*
4	*madanyah jnaatum arhati.*	*but you and I are able to comprehend Him?*

The link-line of Shankara Bhashya connecting verses 20 and 21 says: "The Self cannot be known by any Tom, Dick and Harry who is fully possessed by desire. Only someone qualified like Yama and Nachiketas can achieve success on this path." The path is difficult for those filled with desire, but ***Suvijneya*** or "*easily known*" for those who are dispassionate.

To help interpreting these lines, we take note that the scriptures speak of two selves: one is the ego-self or individual consciousness, and the other is the true Self or universal Consciousness. A subtle intellect is needed to differentiate these. This is the most important point driven by this verse.

Three Contradictions in the Self

The three flashing contradictions in the verse compel us to remember this point about having a subtle intellect. Acharyaji was intent on not letting these further examples of contradictions go unnoticed. The Bhashya brings out the hidden teaching in them:

1 i) ***Sitting, It travels far:*** We can understand the body remaining in one place while the mind travels far away in imagination. This line is not about this type of 'mental travel'. This is about the Self which is all-pervading. There isn't a spot that it does not occupy. Where does it need to travel? That is the riddle raised.

2 ii) ***Sleeping, It goes everywhere:*** Again, when we are asleep, our body is plottable on an x-y axes that give it a location, but the mind is elsewhere in dream. How does the line apply the same to the Self? The Self does not act, so it can be considered as good as asleep. It is not possible for the Self to go about everywhere if it is not acting.

3 iii) ***Joyful, It is joyless:*** The third contradiction is most puzzling. Humans can express joy and still be joyless within. But the Self is free from feeling joy or sorrow. It is said to be All-Bliss at all times.

It is clear that these contradictions are not demanding an explanation. They are not intended to be explained. They only indicate the Self to be beyond the reach of normal human experience, that is all. Lord Yama is introducing Nachiketas to the idea of an understanding that is beyond the operating system of the intellect and the mind.

In the Bhashya, Shankaracharyaji explains these contrasts through two well-chosen similes. Each simile illustrates a special aspect of worldly experience:

i) ***Vishwaroopa:*** "*a multi-facetted prism*". A prism presents a different colour to a viewer as his angle of observation varies. This example shows us the variety of ways in which *many persons see the same object*.

ii) ***Chintamani:*** "*philosopher's stone*". (*chinta* = thought; *mani* = object). The peculiar feature of this stone is that it presents to a viewer the object of his imagination. This example shows the variety of ways in which *the same person sees one object*. If the owner thinks of a cat, he will see a cat in it, and so on. Through these examples Shankaracharyaji tries to show us the illusory nature of the perceived world.

4 The Shankara Bhashya, translating "I" as "us", i.e. "*you and I*", Yama says, "It is only the wise of fine intellect, like *us*, that this Self can be well comprehended." Does Nachiketas really need this boost of praise to give him confidence on the path? He has proven his even-mindedness on many occasions already. It is probably only to encourage the reader that this form of praise is brought in by Shankaracharyaji.

1.2.22: ***Self-Knowledge – 3: Meditation on the Self***

अशरीरँ शरीरेष्वनवस्थेष्ववस्थितम् ।
महान्तं विभुमात्मानं मत्वा धीरो न शोचति ॥ १.२.२२॥

aśarīraṁ śarīrēṣvanavasthēṣvavasthitam |
mahāntaṁ vibhumātmānaṁ matvā dhīrō na śōcati || 1.2.22||

1	*Ashareeram shareereshu*	*As bodiless in the midst of bodies;*
2	*anavastheshu avasthitam;*	*as permanent in the midst of the impermanent;*
3	*mahaantam vibhum aatmaanam*	*and as great and all-pervasive –*
4	*matvaa dheerah na shochati.*	*the wise man who meditates thus on the Self does not come to grief.*

In verse 20 the fruit of freedom from sorrow was said to be attained simply through Dhatu-Prasad or the *serenity of one's mind*. In this verse, the same end – freedom from grief – is said to be attained through the *practice of meditation*.

This clearly equates the two, giving us the truth: "*The essence of meditation is serenity of mind".* Expressed another way, one can say: "*Only with a serene mind is it possible to really meditate*."

Then follows the understanding that through proper meditation alone can one have single-pointed focus on the Self.

The question is: "How do we actually go about meditating?" The method given here combines three techniques:

1 ***Ashareeram***: "*without a body*". The association of the Self to a body is the result of It being reflected in the intellect of the individual being. Without interference from the intellect, It has no such association to a body; It is bodiless; It is the same Self in *all* bodies. There are no boundaries to the Self. Our meditation is thus directed to take us beyond body-consciousness. This technique is taken up further later in this text.

The Self, in the body, remains the Self and does not become the body. It is totally non-attached to the body, and goes beyond the body. Whether the body is that of a King or a beggar, the Self is the same pure substratum in both.

2 ***Avasthitam***: "*that which is fixed; the permanent"*. With reference to all the Upadhis that are associated with the Self, the Self is fixed or permanent, while the Upadhis are ***Anavastheshu,*** not fixed or impermanent.

3 ***Mahantam:*** "*very large*"; which cannot be locked up into any particular object. It is pervasive throughout an object and beyond it. That is to be meditated upon. Meditating in such a manner one attains the Self.

4 The practical result of such meditations is freedom from all sorrow. In addition there is the serenity of mind as described earlier.

The use of the word ***Atman*** to refer to the Reality is significant, because we are talking of the Reality with reference to the individual body, for which the word Atman is more appropriate than Brahman. Brahman is the collective; Atman is the individual.

This verse is a Mahavakya type of verse. It contains all the essential elements of the Brahman-Jiva identity. All the key words are placed in the same case (Dviteeya Vibhakti), viz. ***Ashiram***, ***Asthitam***, ***Mahantam***, and ***Atmanam***. This means they all refer to the same Reality.

THE ESSENTIAL QUALIFICATION

1.2.23: ***The Sole Condition: Choose the Self***

नायमात्मा प्रवचनेन लभ्यो
न मेधया न बहुना श्रुतेन ।
यमेवैष वृणुते तेन लभ्यः
तस्यैष आत्मा विवृणुते तनूं स्वाम् ॥ १.२.२३॥

nāyamātmā pravacanēna labhyō
na mēdhayā na bahunā śrutēna |
yamēvaiṣa vr̥ṇutē tēna labhyaḥ
tasyaiṣa ātmā vivr̥ṇutē tanūṁ svām || 1.2.23||

1	*Na ayam aatmaa pra-vachanena labhyah*	*It is not possible for this Self to be known through **much study**;*
2	*na medhayaa na bahunaa shrutena;*	*nor through the intellect, nor through much hearing.*
3	*yam eva eshah vrinute tena labhyah*	*He alone who **chooses** the Self, attains It.*
4	*tasya eshah aatmaa vivrinute tanoom svaam.*	*His attainment of the Self is through Its **self-revelation** of Its own true nature.*

Here we have one of those verses which a Sadhaka on the spiritual path has to hang on to throughout his Sadhana. It contains the essential spirit of all Sadhana.

"The Self and Self alone has to be chosen by us, for no reason other than wanting It. Anything else that we do in the name of the Self, without keeping in mind the Self before us, will only be paraphernalia, and not bear any spiritual fruit."

1 If the Self is forgotten any amount of study is of no avail;

2 Forgetful of the Self, the most powerful and sharp intellect is of no use; any amount of lectures that we hear or knowledge that we obtain cannot help move us an inch closer to It. Study and hearing lectures have meaning only to take us closer to God.

3 Only if we choose the Self, that is, if we really long for God from the bottom of our heart, can we attain Him.

Acharyaji on "Longing for God"

3-4 Acharyaji's words on this Pada were awe-inspiring:

"If the means are not right, we cannot know the Self. The right means is devotion to the absolute Truth. It is by the power of dedication, love or Bhakti that we can attain It. Our call must be for the Self, from the heart. Once we lose the *heart* for what we do, we lose our goal. Then it becomes a hunt for 'I want to achieve'. One becomes a 'Swami Achievananda'!

"We have *to choose to want God*, then He will catch us and draw us to Him. Have we chosen Him or have we chosen just the Upanishads? When we choose the Upanishads, is it just the words? Mere *head* only guides; it is the *heart* that leads. Once we choose Him with our heart, only then the head can tell us 'How'.

"Sita symbolizes the Jiva in captivity in Lanka. She only yearned for Rama. That is all she could do. Her head did not care about the 'How'. But that was enough to bring Rama, the Supreme Soul, to her. Rama did the rest – He crossed the mighty ocean, He destroyed the demons, He killed Ravana, and so on. She did only one thing – longed intensely for Him!

"The Self is attained by the mere fact that we have *chosen* It. Once chosen, It reveals Itself to us in due course of time.

"This is indeed a verse of great importance. It tells us what our inner fire should be in our quest. It shows the passion, the heart we have to bring into our quest for God. Many may be 'good' but they may not be 'good enough'. 'Good enough' means wanting God and God alone for His sake!"

Thus did Acharyaji teach us to love our studies for God's sake alone!

1.2.24: ***The Man of Sinful Conduct***

नाविरतो दुश्चरितान्नाशान्तो नासमाहितः ।
नाशान्तमानसो वाऽपि प्रज्ञानेनैनमाप्नुयात् ॥ १.२.२४॥

nāviratō duścaritānnāśāntō nāsamāhitaḥ |
nāśāntamānasō vā:'pi prajñānēnainamāpnuyāt || 1.2.24||

1	*Na aviratah dush-charitaat*	*He who has not desisted from bad conduct;*
2	*na ashaantah,* *na asamaahitah;*	*whose senses are not under control,* *whose mind is not concentrated,*
3	*na ashaanta maanasah vaa api*	*whose mind is also not free from anxiety – he*
4	*prajnaanena enam aapnuyaat.*	*cannot attain this Self even through knowledge.*

From the seeker possessing the desirable quality of wanting God alone, we now move to the other end of the scale to the ***Dush-Charitaat***, the man of "*undesirable conduct*" who does not want to even hear the Name of God. He has everything that a seeker should *not* be:

1 The man of bad conduct engages in Nishidha (prohibited) as well as Kamya (desire-ridden) Karmas; he neglects Nitya and Nimitta Karmas (daily and occasional duties) which he is supposed to do.

2 Not quietening the senses; and not having the mind focused on the goal. A restless mind that is uncontrolled indulges in sinful tendencies. Without Shama and Dama (internal and external checkpoints) the mind is not focused or concentrated. It rejoices in Adharma.

3 Even if mind is well trained, it has its eye on the fruit, on the trophy that it expects to get for the Sadhana that is done. There is a business-like mentality of being rewarded.

A mind that is set on the future, i.e. result-oriented, is not fit for the vision of the Self. It does not give time for evolution to unfold itself. It is impatient, wanting to grab the fruit now itself. He wants to achieve things fast, and carries the same mentality into the spiritual realm as well. Just as a footballer performs well only if his whole mind is on the ball, not on the glory after winning; and as a student writing an exam has to have his mind on the knowledge acquired, and not on the marks he is going to get – so also, a seeker has to keep focused on God for God's sake, with no other motive contaminating his search.

There is a Buddhist saying which goes: "Don't ask how far; just keep walking!"

4 This Self is not for such people, even if they have all the knowledge!

We should therefore do Sadhana for the love of it. We must enjoy being dispassionate, not feel that we are losing out on anything. Self-denial should never be done grudgingly. For this reason, a Bhakta is taught never to want even Liberation, since it takes away his 'presence of mind.' Hanuman was not interested in Vaikuntha. Only such

disinterested, yet passionate devotee who enjoys what he does, can reach the Self. One who is pre-occupied with results cannot attain It.

In the Bhashya, Shankaracharya adds one more requirement – the presence of a Guru. The path is so subtle, and self-delusion can be so overwhelming, that a Guru is needed to prevent one from being content with little gains and miss the Self.

Acharyaji concluded in grand style with a beautiful simile: "A caterpillar is on a eucalyptus leaf. It does not like being there, but it has no other choice. It has to eat what is there, even though its mouth is burning with the eucalyptus taste. But if you place a mulberry leaf next to it, it will, so to speak, fly to it without hesitation to enjoy its favourite flavour. Similarly, we should wean the mind away from sensuality by offering it better pastures of Sattwic joys. Once it tastes the higher, it will not be dragged to the lower."

1.2.25: ***Simile: The Lord at His Meal***

यस्य ब्रह्म च क्षत्रं च उभे भवत ओदनः ।
मृत्युर्यस्योपसेचनं क इत्था वेद यत्र सः ॥ १.२.२५॥

yasya brahma ca kṣatraṁ ca ubhē bhavata ōdanaḥ |
mr̥tyuryasyōpasēcanaṁ ka itthā vēda yatra saḥ || 1.2.25||

1	*Yasya brahma cha kshatram cha*	*To the Self the Brahmana and Kshatriya classes*
2	*ubhe bhavatah odanah;*	*are both, as it were, a main dish of cooked rice;*
3	*mrituh yasya upasechanam kah*	*to Him death itself is merely a side dish – he who*
4	*itthaa veda yatra sah.*	*knows thus (of sinful conduct), where would he be?*

The last verse of this chapter paints a rather humorous picture. The Self is depicted as being at His dinner table. The scene may be imagined as something quite awesome: It is midday and the Lord has just come home very hungry. The Earth itself is the Lord's dining table; what His Dining hall must be like can just be imagined. And what is His food? This is where the verse begins…

The people on Earth make up the Lord's various dishes!

1-2 The most sagely and valorous ones are the Brahmanas and Kshatriyas. They comprise the choicest, largest or main dish of His meal, the ***Odanah*** or cooked rice.

3 The rest of humanity such as the Vaishyas and Shudras, who live such lives as make them playthings in the hands of Death due to repeated cycles of births and deaths, make up only His ***Upasechanam***, the side-dish, i.e. the pickle of His meal. He just licks them at his leisure! They classify only as snacks in His menu! In the verse these people are themselves called "death itself". They live only to die!

4 Now for the best part of the simile. With all four groups of people who perform their allotted duties already taken care of, where would we put the people who "know thus", i.e. who live the kind of life described in the previous verse – the sinful conduct of eating, drinking and making merry? They don't even have a place on the Lord's dining table!

Acharyaji humorously said that perhaps they will not even feature in His great "burp" after His meal! What an unusual simile to manifest in the luminous mind of the Rishi!

Yama is telling Nachiketas, “My dear Nachiketas, there is only one way of knowing the Self: You must love Him alone above everything else, with passion. Don’t give up. Silence the mind and find in it a gap to sneak through to the Self. Yearn for this for Its own sake. Love Him with all your heart, and do not allow the Ego to get even the slightest chance to gap in and steal the show.”

With this amazingly picturesque simile ends the second Chapter of the Upanishad. Indeed, the Self is unknowable except to the purest of souls like Yama and Nachiketas. Most of humanity would have to be content being just a speck on His side-plate!

॥ इति काठकोपनिषदि प्रथमाध्याये द्वितीया वल्ली ॥

|| iti kāṭhakōpaniṣadi prathamādhyāyē dvitīyā vallī ||

*****

Chapter 1.3: (17 verses)
THE JOURNEY AHEAD

Link Passage (Bhashya) Connecting Chapter 1.2 With Chapter 1.3:

Thus far we have learnt about Vidya and Avidya, or Sreyas and Preyas, the two choices that stand before man at every moment. We have seen their broad characteristics and known of the opposite nature of their fruits or results in the last Chapter. In this Chapter we aim to go further in our understanding of their deeper nature. In particular, we are interested in the means to acquire knowledge or Vidya.

In order to do this, an **Extended Metaphor** is introduced into the text for ease of understanding. Two selves are posited at the outset, the Jiva and the Supreme Self. One is in the process of attaining or *the attainer*, and the other is that which is to be *attained*. One is the traveller, and the other is the destination. The obvious metaphor for such a situation is the means of travel common in Vedic times – namely, the **CHARIOT**.

This entire Chapter is centred around this magnificent metaphor which clearly contains the whole concept of the Sadhana to be done by the traveller to reach his destination safely and with ease.

THE TRAVELLERS

1.3.1: ***Simile: The Two Drinkers***

ऋतं पिबन्तौ सुकृतस्य लोके
गुहां प्रविष्टौ परमे परार्धे ।
छायातपौ ब्रह्मविदो वदन्ति
पञ्चाग्नयो ये च त्रिणाचिकेताः ॥ १.३.१॥

ṛtaṁ pibantau sukṛtasya lōkē
guhāṁ praviṣṭau paramē parārdhē |
chāyātapau brahmavidō vadanti
pañcāgnayō yē ca triṇācikētāḥ || 1.3.1||

1	*Ritam pibantau sukritasya loke*	***Two drinkers** of the inevitable fruits of their good works in the world,*
2	*goohaa(yaa)m pravishtau parame paraadhe;*	*have entered and are seated in a deep hidden cave which is the abode of the Most High.*
3	*chhaayaa-tapau brahmavidah vadanti*	*"These two are as different as shadow and light," so say i) the knowers of Brahman;*
4	*pancha agnayah ye cha trinaachiketaah.*	*ii) those who worship the "Five Fires" (i.e. the householders); and iii) the performers of the "Tri-Nachiketas" sacrifice.*

The Literal Scenario

At first reading, the literal meaning of this strange verse, is quite amusing:

Two drinkers? At once the picture pops up in our mind's eye of two persons who, at the end of a hard day's honest work, are sitting together relaxed, having a drink. A secret cave? This must be their remote meeting place. They cannot drink in the open, so they select a dark corner of the cave where they may not be disturbed in this pastime – least of all overheard by anyone! One of them is a regular drunkard, the other who always accompanies him is . . . is a teetotaler! He is having only grape juice, but who would believe that? His association with his friend implicates him in the drinking without question.

What an exciting start to an Upanishadic drama! Our curiosity is aroused – we are tempted to read more . . . Is this the right book we have in our hands? Is this the Katha Upanishad, or is it some common novel we have accidentally picked up in its place? Sure, it is the right book. At this point we realize that the Upanishads need a qualified Teacher to explain their meaning to us. Sandeepany provides just that –

The Figurative Scenario

1 ***Pibantau***: "*the two drinkers*". Poetry and drama aside, let us first identify the drinkers. They are actually father and son. The Jiva or individual self is the son, and Atman, the Supreme Self, is the Father. In essence, the son is a chip of the old block; he has the likeness of his father. The father represents the role model, the *Destination* to be reached. The son is getting there slowly, he is the *Traveller* who will reach the destination eventually. The father is concerned with the difficulties the son is facing in reaching him, so he keeps a watchful eye on him. The son seems to have encountered some problems.

Ritam: "*the drink*". What are they drinking? Literally, Ritam this means "*the truth*", but in this case the truth is "the fruits of their actions", i.e. their Karma. The word Truth is used because only by the fruits of actions can we truly know the motives with which they were performed. There is no clearer indicator of the truth of actions than their fruits.

The drinking: this is the activity they are engaged in, a figurative way of expressing the 'Enjoyership' attached to the hard work the Jiva puts in. The daily grind at work has a singular motive – to enjoy some pleasure, whatever it may be. And 'drinking' symbolizes this enjoyment. This is the Jiva's daily pastime, and the father is witnessing it at every moment.

2 ***Goohaam*** (the Bhashya corrects this to ***Goohaayaam***): "*in a dark, secret cave*". This is the secret meeting place where the drinking is taking place. Where is this cave? It is in the core of one's heart, a common reference in the Upanishads. This heart is not the visible heart, but is actually the intellect. That is the meeting point of the two 'drinkers'. In the intellect the Supreme Self gets reflected and the reflection is named the Jiva or Ego.

Pravishtau: "*entering*". The Supreme Self is actually a teetotaler, meaning that He is aloof from all worldly happenings. He is untouched by our Upadhis or conditionings. Yet He cannot avoid being accused with the Jiva of being party to the enjoyment, however innocent we know He is. The Self, by the very fact of *entering* the gross body equipment gets contaminated by that body in the intellect and becomes the Jiva. The contaminated or reflected Consciousness (the Jiva) is the one who does and enjoys, but to all appearances the Self, too, gets implicated in the doing and the enjoying. The association is inevitable.

Shankaracharyaji uses his own simile here to explain the association of the Self with the Jiva's activities. The '***Chatri***' or umbrella simile was well-known in those days. A procession going past had many in the group holding umbrellas, but not all. However, as the

procession went by, it was common to hear it said, "There go the *chatriwalas*, the 'umbrella-people'!" All in the procession get blanketed with the same epithet, including those who do not carry an umbrella. The Self, the teetotaler, is in the same situation; He cannot avoid being in the dock with the accused Jiva.

3a When it is said the two are different as shadow and light, it refers to the status of the Self and Jiva, the Self being the original light and Jiva being the reflected light and, it may be added a very poor version of it. The Jiva is limited, the Self is limitless; this is the wide gulf between them.

Connection With the Vedas

Three types of people accept the existence of these two as being apart from each other, yet related as father and son. Each type represents one of the three major divisions of the Vedas, as described under each of them below. They are:

3b i) ***Brahmavidah***: "*the knowers of Brahman*". They represent the *Jnana Kanda* of the Vedas. They are the wise, realized sages who know Brahman, know the truth of the Self's innocence. They know by direct experience that the Self is untouched by the deedss or misdeeds of the Jiva, that the two are like 'chalk and cheese', or like shadow and light.

The other two types know about the Self and Jiva by knowledge at the intellectual level, not by direct experience. They accept the two on faith to obtain certain favours:

4a ii) ***Pancha-Agnayah***: "*performers of the 'Five Fires'*", i.e. the householders. They represent the *Karma Kanda* of the Vedas. They perform these sacrifices in order to obtain certain desirable results from them on earth. Their commitment in doing these sacrifices is to align themselves with the Laws of Nature, that is, to obey Dharma and thereby make themselves worthy of what they desire. They look upon the Self as the Supreme Giver or Dispenser of the fruits of their actions.

4b iii) ***Tri-Nachiketaah***: "*those who perform the Nachiketas Fire three times*", as earlier described, i.e. the worshippers or Upasakas. They represent the *Upasana Kanda* of the Vedas. This group wish to go to the heavenly worlds to enjoy a more refined lifestyle. They have seen through the shortcomings of the pleasures found on earth. They look upon the Self as something to be worshipped, from whom they will accumulate merits.

The connection of this verse to the whole Vedas asshown above, makes this verse a very significant one. Placed at the very start of the Chapter, it not only links this chapter to the previous two, but also sets the foundation for the Chariot simile that is to follow.

Connection With the Third Boon

All three categories of people mentioned here are aware of the knowledge that the Jiva exists, and that it is quite different from the Self. This directly relates the verse to Nachiketas's third boon where the question arises. These three groups say, "***He exists***".

Those who are ignorant of the existence of the Self, and who have not even been included on the menu of the Lord's dinner in the last verse of the previous chapter, are the atheists, the materialists, etc, who simply live the animalistic life described in 2.24, giving no thought to their spiritual development. These groups say, "***He does not exist***".

1.3.2: ***Summary Statement of Chapters 1 & 2***

यः सेतुरीजानानामक्षरं ब्रह्म यत् परम् ।
अभयं तितीर्षतां पारं नाचिकेतँ शकेमहि ॥ १.३.२॥

yaḥ sēturījānānāmakṣaraṁ brahma yat param |
abhayaṁ titīrṣatāṁ pāraṁ nācikētaṁ̐ śakēmahi || 1.3.2||

1	*Yah setuh eejaanaanaam*	*There is a "**Bridge**" i) for the performers of sacrifice; and*
2	*aksharam brahma yat param;*	*ii) for reaching the indestructible Highest Brahman.*
3a 3b	*abhayam, titeershataam paaram.*	*(The latter) takes one beyond all **Fear** (to Non-duality); wheras beyond **sorrow** to the 'other' shore (the heavens)*
4	*naachiketam shakemahi.*	*leads the 'Nachiketas Fire' which we have already learnt.*

Two distinct requirements for two distinct seekers have been addressed so far. The following facts are stated in order to prepare us for the next phase in the text, which explains the Sadhana or means by which each of these two types gets what he wants:

A. The Bridge & Need of the Karma Upasaka:

1 & **3b-4** Chapter 1 aquaints us with the Upasana for performing the Nachiketas Fire Sacrifice for those wishing to obtain *entry* into the higher realms of heaven after death. In their case, the ***Setu*** or "*bridge*" is between the Earth and the Heavenly planes.

Eejaanaanaam: is 6th Case in Samskrit, "*of the sacrificers*"; in English it sounds more correct to say "*for the sacrificers*".

This path is covered by *Nachiketas's 2nd boon*, which meets the need of the *Karma Upasakas* who wish only to go to heaven to enjoy the pleasures there, even if they are only temporary. They desire to go beyond the sorrows they face in this world.

The Karma Upasakas see the Self as something to be *worshipped* so as to obtain some favour – that of going to heavenly planes to enjoy the refined pleasures there.

B. The Bridge & Need of the Jnani:

2-3a Chapter 2 aquaints us with knowledge of the Self. We step into the higher realm of Brahman, which is for those wishing to obtain *exit* from the world of Samsara. In their case, the ***Setu*** or "*bridge*" is from the manifested plane of Unreality to the unmanifested plane of the Absolute Reality.

Titeershataam: is 6th Case in Samskrit, "*of those who wish to cross";* again, in English it sounds better to say "*for those who wish to cross*".

This path is covered by *Nachiketas's 3rd boon*, which meets the need of the *Jnanis* who wish to attain the Supreme Brahman, imperishable and eternal, and thereby come out of the birth and death cycle permanently. They attain freedom from fear by reaching Non-duality, where there is no 'other' to cause any fear.

The Jnanis see the Self as something that is their own higher Self, to be *meditated* upon and united with so as to be totally liberated from all desire for favours, and be freed from all sorrows of the relative world.

THE CHARIOT METAPHOR

1.3.3 & 4: ***The Chariot Metaphor Introduced***

आत्मानँ रथितं विद्धि शरीरँ रथमेव तु ।
बुद्धिं तु सारथिं विद्धि मनः प्रग्रहमेव च ॥ १.३.३॥

इन्द्रियाणि हयानाहुर्विषयाँ स्तेषु गोचरान् ।
आत्मेन्द्रियमनोयुक्तं भोक्तेत्याहुर्मनीषिणः ॥ १.३.४॥

ātmānaṁ rathitaṁ viddhi śarīraṁ rathamēva tu |
buddhiṁ tu sārathiṁ viddhi manaḥ pragrahamēva ca || 1.3.3||

indriyāṇi hayānāhurviṣayāṁ stēṣu gōcarān |
ātmēndriyamanōyuktaṁ bhōktētyāhurmanīṣiṇaḥ || 1.3.4||

1	*Aatmaanam rathinam viddhi*	*Know the **Jiva** to be the master of the chariot;*
2	*shareeram ratham eva tu;*	*and the **body** to be the chariot;*
3	*buddhim tu saarathim viddhi*	*know the **intellect** as the charioteer;*
4	*manah pragraham eva cha.*	*and the **mind** as verily the bridle.*

5	*Indriyaani hayaan aahuh*	*The **senses** they say are the horses;*
6	*vishayaan teshu gocharaan;*	*and the **sense objects** are the roads;*
7	*aatmaa-indriya-manah yuktam*	***The Self**, associated with body, senses and mind,*
8	*bhoktaa iti aahuh maneeshinah.*	*is the enjoyer – so say the wise ones.*

1 The **Owner**	-	The Jiva, the individual soul, who rides in the chariot;
2 The **Chariot**	-	The physical body;
3 The **Charioteer**	-	The intellect;
4 The **Bridle** or Reins	-	The mind;
5 The **Horses**	-	The sense organs, 5 no;
6 The **Roads**	-	The sense objects;
7-8 The **Enjoyer**	-	The conditioned Self, associated with body, etc;

The Link Text between verses 2/3 in the Bhashya says that of the two selves, the Jiva is travelling in this body chariot. Where he goes depends on his state of knowledge or ignorance. The former takes him across Samsara; the latter, deeper into Samsara.

Is the Jiva a Samsari?

The owner is the Jiva who simply sits in the back seat as the traveller. He engages others to take his chariot to its destination. They are employed by him, as it were. In reality, each Jiva gets the necessary intellect, mind, sense organs and body due to it in accordance with his Prarabdha. So he is responsible for training his 'employees'.

Emphasis is placed in the Bhashya on the fact that the Jiva is not really a Samsari by nature. He has a far greater purpose to fulfil. His real destination in this life is to unite himself to the Supreme Self, the Atman. Due to ignorance he has become 'trapped' into a

very limited existence in his physical and mental Upadhis he possesses. He really does not want to remain bound to the world, but that is his helpless situation. He searches for the knowledge to get out of this vicious cycle.

The chariot metaphor helps us to grasp what is to be done to progress spiritually. It tells us the options available to the Jiva. The Jiva has *to choose* the right options.

1.3.5 & 6: ***The Intellect: Avijnanavan and Vijnanavan***

यस्त्वविज्ञानवान्भवत्ययुक्तेन मनसा सदा ।
तस्येन्द्रियाण्यवश्यानि दुष्टाश्वा इव सारथेः ॥ १.३.५॥

यस्तु विज्ञानवान्भवति युक्तेन मनसा सदा ।
तस्येन्द्रियाणि वश्यानि सदश्वा इव सारथेः ॥ १.३.६॥

yastvavijñānavānbhavatyayuktēna manasā sadā |
tasyēndriyāṇyavaśyāni duṣṭāśvā iva sārathēḥ || 1.3.5||

yastu vijñānavānbhavati yuktēna manasā sadā |
tasyēndriyāṇi vaśyāni sadaśvā iva sārathēḥ || 1.3.6||

1	*Yah tu avijnaanavaan bhavati*	*He who is of a **non-discriminating intellect**,*
2	*ayuktena manasaa sadaa;*	*having an **unrestrained** mind always,*
3	*tasya indriyaani avashyaani*	*his senses are **uncontrollable***
4	*dushta ashvaah iva saaratheh.*	*like the **wild** horses of the charioteer.*

5	*Yah tu vijnaanavaan bhavati*	*But he who is of a **discriminating intellect**,*
6	*yuktena manasaa sadaa;*	*having **restrained** his mind always,*
7	*tasya indriyaani vashyaani*	*his senses are **controllable***
8	*sad ashvaah iva saaratheh.*	*like the **tame** horses of the charioteer.*

These two verses focus on the **intellect**, which can be of two opposite types:

1-4 ***The Avijnana-vani:*** The undiscriminating charioteer is the most dangerous person to entrust for this work. A dull intellect filled with Tamas or a restless Rajasic intellect cannot be relied upon to take one safely across Samsara.

An unthinking driver will cause a lot of problems. Which owner, after having spent a fortune on a brand new Mercedes salon, will entrust it to a dull-witted, reckless driver?

5-8 ***The Vijnana-vani:*** This is the discriminating driver who is cautious about following all the road rules, who is skilled in driving, who takes great care to rein in the mind so that the horses are well-controlled. A good intellect is the key to a successful journey.

A good charioteer is sane and sober, thoughtful and discerning, understanding and knowledgeable, he is patient, careful and alert to avert any danger on the road. For the owner's peace of mind, it is worth giving the intellect the highest salary.

The Vijnana-vani is capable of choosing Sreyas instead of Preyas. He possesses the fortitude to walk the path of Vidya. As discrimination is the key to the whole journey, it pays

to take time and get the intellect trained to do this task well – even if that means spending two years on a Vedanta Course!

The message we take from these two verses is: "Let the Lord be the charioteer of our lives. He makes all the difference. Let us place our intellect in His hands. Let us invoke the Grace of Gayatri to raise our Buddhi towards the Light and keep it there. Let it not linger in the darkness of ignorance."

1.3.7, 8, & 9: ***The Destination: Successfully Reaching the Goal***

यस्त्वविज्ञानवान्भवत्यमनस्कः सदाऽशुचिः ।
न स तत्पदमाप्नोति संसारं चाधिगच्छति ॥ १.३.७॥

यस्तु विज्ञानवान्भवति समनस्कः सदा शुचिः ।
स तु तत्पदमाप्नोति यस्माद्भूयो न जायते ॥ १.३.८॥

विज्ञानसारथिर्यस्तु मनः प्रग्रहवान्नरः ।
सोऽध्वनः पारमाप्नोति तद्विष्णोः परमं पदम् ॥ १.३.९॥

yastvavijñānavānbhavatyamanaskaḥ sadā:'śuciḥ |
na sa tatpadamāpnōti saṁsāraṁ cādhigacchati || 1.3.7||

yastu vijñānavānbhavati samanaskaḥ sadā śuciḥ |
sa tu tatpadamāpnōti yasmādbhūyō na jāyatē || 1.3.8||

vijñānasārathiryastu manaḥ pragrahavānnaraḥ |
sō:'dhvanaḥ pāramāpnōti tadviṣṇōḥ paramaṁ padam || 1.3.9||

1	*Yah tu avijnaanavaan bhavati*	*He who is of a **non-discriminating intellect**,*
2	*amanaskah sadaa ashuchih;*	*ever **thoughtless** and always impure,*
3	*na sah tat padam aapnoti*	*he **never attains** that Goal;*
4	*samsaaram cha adhi-gacchhati.*	*instead, he gets **further into Samsara**.*

5	*Yah to vijnaanavaan bhavati*	*But he who is of a **discriminating intellect**,*
6	*samanaskah sadaa shuchih;*	*ever **thoughtful** and ever pure,*
7	*sah tu tat padam aapnoti*	*he **verily attains** that Goal;*
8	*yasmaat bhooyah na jaayate.*	*whence he is **not born again**.*

9	*Vijnaana saarathih yah tu*	*One who has a **good intellect** as his charioteer,*
10	*manah pragrahavaan narah;*	*and a **well-controlled mind** as his reins,*
11	*sah adhvanah paaram aapnoti*	*such a man, attains the end of his journey,*
12	*tat vishnoh paramam padam.*	*that Supreme Abode of Vishnu, the all-pervading.*

These three verses focus on the **Destination**. The intellect is the key deciding factor. If it is of the Vijnana-vani type, there will be a smooth ride to the end of the road. If not, then one has to prepare for a very bumpy ride, perhaps even a collision sooner or later.

The Bhashya carefully picks up the key qualities needed in the intellect and the mind.

1-4 ***The Avijnana-vani:*** Lack of discrimination and thoughtlessness are the factors that make a poor charioteer. Instead of taking one to the Goal, such a driver takes one deeper into the pit of worldly existence.

5-8 ***The Vijnana-vani:*** The intellect has to be discriminative and thoughtful. With these two, the horses of the senses will certainly be strong and obedient. They cannot do any mischief if the reins are firmly held.

9-10 Besides a good intellect, a well-disciplined mind is also needed. This is brought into the equation at this point. Whilst the fruit of a well-trained intellect is one-pointedness or **Chitta-Ekagrata,** the fruit of a well-trained mind is purity or **Chitta-Shuddhi**. The mind has to be well controlled and disciplined, and emotionally stable. A mind that obeys the orders from the intellect is needed.

11-12 The destination reached is the *Abode of Vishnu*, which will mean different things to the three persons we met in 1.3.1. But that difference is not important at this stage of the text. It is enough for our Sadhana purposes to know that such qualities will certainly take us to our proper destination without a hitch.

THE ROUTE OF THE JOURNEY

1.3.10 & 11: ***The Journey Mapped Out***

इन्द्रियेभ्यः परा ह्यर्था अर्थेभ्यश्च परं मनः ।
मनसस्तु परा बुद्धिर्बुद्धेरात्मा महान्परः ॥ १.३.१०॥

महतः परमव्यक्तमव्यक्तात्पुरुषः परः ।
पुरुषान्न परं किंचित्सा काष्ठा सा परा गतिः ॥ १.३.११॥

indriyēbhyaḥ parā hyarthā arthēbhyaśca paraṁ manaḥ |
manasastu parā buddhirbuddhērātmā mahānparaḥ || 1.3.10||

mahataḥ paramavyaktamavyaktātpuruṣaḥ paraḥ |
puruṣānna paraṁ kiṁcitsā kāṣṭhā sā parā gatiḥ || 1.3.11||

1	*Indriyebhyah paraa hi arthaah*	*Beyond the **senses** are the sense objects;*
2	*arthebhyah cha param manah;*	*beyond these **objects** is the mind;*
3	*manasah tu paraa buddhih*	*beyond the **mind** is the intellect;*
4	*buddheh aatmaa mahaan parah.*	*and beyond the **intellect** is the Great Self.*

5	*Mahatah param avyaktam*	*Beyond the great **Manifested** is the unmanifested;*
6	*avyaktaat purushah parah;*	*beyond the **unmanifested** is the Purusha;*
7	*purushaat na param kinchit*	*beyond the **Purushah** there is nothing;*
8	*saa kaashthaa saa paraa gatih.*	*That is the end, That is the **highest Goal**.*

Acharyaji assured us that in the entire scriptures, we will not get verses like in this chapter that bring so much clarity concerning the Sadhana to attain the Self. For that

reason, the *Katha Upanishad* is highly quoted by preachers and teachers. It is quite unique for the simple and convincing way in which it brings home to us the essentials of Sadhana.

The Forward & the Return Journeys

In these two verses, the route is mapped out. How the goal, namely Brahman, is to be reached is shown from here onwards. Nachiketas can pack his luggage for the trip ahead! The journey that is to end in his own Self is about to begin! More is said of this journey in the next verse. Here only the route is given.

When creation begins, it is from Brahman down to the gross manifested world. This is the forward journey, called **Adhyaropa** or a theoretical superimposition. It is represented from Pada **1-8**. The return journey is called **Apavada** or the intellectual de-superimposition. This takes us back from the gross to the subtle and then to the causal, until we return to Brahman. It is represented from Pada **8-1**.

The Bhashya's Link: Three Criteria of Subtlety

At one point in the Bhashya, Shankaracharya, in answering an objection, says that the journey is not in space, not in an 'x-y-z axes' system, but a journey in *understanding*, knowing and reaching deeper levels within our Being. It is like a journey made by Earth to discover its own core. No physical distance needs to be traversed. Earth needs only to "meditate" on itself, going deeper and subtler till it reaches its own core.

Three criteria are used in the Bhashya to differentiate a lower realm from a higher:

i) ***Sookshma Taram***: *Subtlety* – the higher is subtler than the lower realm.

ii) ***Sarva Mahat Taram***: *Vastness* – the higher is potentially more powerful and inclusive than the lower realm.

iii) ***Pratyag Atma Bhootam***: *Immanence* – the higher is reached by going deeper and deeper within; going to the inner core brings us to the next level of subtlety.

A table at this point will help clear the picture:

Level	Samskrit Name of Level	English Translation, Other Names
1	**INDRIYA**	*The 5 Sense Organs of Perception*
2	**ARTHA**	*The Sense Objects*
3	**MANAS**	*The Mind (random thoughts)*
4	**BUDDHI**	*The Intellect (organized thoughts)*
5	**MAHAT (Hiranyagarbha)**	*Great Soul, Total Intellect*
6	**PRAKRITI**	*Unmanifest, Samashthi Karana, Akasha, Maya*
7	**PARAMA PURUSHA**	*The Self, Brahman, Supreme Consciousness*

From Sense Organs to Sense Objects :

1 At first glance it is normal to think there is a mistake here – that the two levels have been interchanged. Surely the objects are grosser than the senses? The reason would be that the senses are made of subtle elements and the objects of gross elements. But Yama has switched their places. Acharyaji's first response was to say, "Yama has bowled a 'bouncer' out of the blue, but Shankaracharya responds to it with a flash of brilliance – he plays a hook shot and despatches it for a six!"

Let us analyse the "hook shot" using the 3 criteria given above:

i) *Subtlety*: The sense organs are an assemblage of sense objects. That makes the senses *effects* of the objects, which means the senses are lower in the hierarchy than the objects. The objects have to be considered subtler when seen in this manner!

ii) *Vastness*: The sense objects are clearly far greater in number and size than the senses. Besides, the sensory range of the stimuli they emit is vaster than that picked up by the senses. X-rays for example cannot be seen, certain sounds cannot be heard.

iii) *Immanence*: The sensory stimuli from the objects pervade the senses. Without these stimuli from the objects, the senses would have no work to do. Hence the objects form the core of the senses, and are thus subtler.

In this way Shankaracharya successfully handles the 'bouncer'!

From Sense Objects to the Mind:

2 This is much easier and more conventional than the first explanation:

i) The Bhashya considers the Mind to be produced from the Tanmatras, whereas the objects are produced from the gross elements. As a pot is a particular form of clay, so also, the mind is a particular form of the Tanmatras. The mind's *subtlety* is seen from this.

ii) The mind receives all the five perceptions from the objects via the sense organs. It then knows what the object is. There is a seer – seen relationship between them. The seer is always greater than the seen. The mind can see many objects – mind is one, objects are many.

iii) The gross elements are produced from the Tanmatras, their cause. The cause is always *inside* the effects. The third criterion is satisfied.

From Mind to the Intellect:

3 i) Mind is random thoughts, whereas the intellect is organized thoughts. This shows that intellect is *subtler*.

ii) Intellect governs the mind. It produces the decisions for the mind to act upon. It envisions a possibility; the mind cannot do that. Intellect is thus *vaster* than mind.

iii) The Antahkarana or inner equipment is one entity consisting of four subdivisions. The intellect weighs all the thoughts contained in the mind and produces a decision from it. The intellect is the *innermost core* of the inner instrument.

From Intellect to Mahat or Total Intellect:

4 i) and ii) The individual intellect is restricted in its operation to just one mind and body system. The Mahat is the sum of all intellects. The individual intellect is a part of the Total Intellect. Thus the Mahat is *subtler* and *vaster*.

iii) The Total Intellect is the substance of which is made the individual intellect. Thus the Total is at the *inner core* of every intellect.

This brings us to the end of 1.3.10, which deals with the Manifested creation. For the Unmanifested level we go into 1.3.11.

From Total Intellect (Mahat) to the Unmanifest (Prakriti):

5 The cause of this manifested world is Prakriti. From Prakriti arises Hiranyagarbha or Mahat. Hence, all the conditions necessary to prove that Prakriti is Param compared to Mahat, are met. Prakriti is like the seed from which the whole banyan tree grows. It

contains all the potential powers for creation to take place. The Great Prakriti is Unmanifest even to the mind and intellect, which in turn are unmanifest to the senses. Prakriti is the Cause of the entire manifestation of the universe. It is also called Maya, Shakti, the Divine Mother, Beeja, and Pradhana.

The word '*Ota-Prota*' is used to describe the role of Prakriti. It means "warp and woof" as in the textile industry. The entire universe is the warp and woof of Prakriti. This well describes the vastness of Prakriti.

From the Unmanifested (Prakriti) to the Supreme Self (Parama Purusha):

6 Here we come to the ultimate Causeless cause of everything. The Purusha is the subtlest level, the vastest and the innermost core of everything in creation.

7 Beyond it there is nothing. It is the Substratum of all objects created, gross or subtle. The Self is the culmination of subtlety.

The Ultimate Reality

8 Our final resting place is not the cemetry, but the inner Self, the Ultimate Reality.

It would be absurd to think of something else equal to the Self. There cannot be two Realities – it is illogical. A sect of Buddhism called Vijnanavadins attempted that by positing Non-Existence beyond Existence. That led to enormous problems in logic such as "infinite regression", and ended in it being called *Agnostic*.

Causeless cause may be understood this way: Avyakta or Prakriti is the cause of Hiranyagarbha and through it the entire Samashti Prapancha (universe). Prakriti gets modified and produces various objects of creation, each different from the other. It may be said to be their "modifying cause". The Purusha is said to be the Cause of this cause (Prakriti) in a totally different sense. It undergoes no modification Itself, but it supports all that Prakriti produces. It is the Cause of all by being their substratum, while still remaining totally pure and unaffected by the changes taking place in the universe.

A good simile for this is the snake and the rope. The rope stands for Brahman; the snake for this manifested world. The rope is 'vaster' than the snake that is superimposed on it. The rope pervades the snake, not vice versa. Hence, the rope is subtler than the snake, vaster than it, and is its inner core.

The all-pervasiveness of Purusha is what gives it that name. It is such a unique quality that 'Purusha' is the only term used in Vedic literature for It. This is unlike Prakriti which has many names.

An Insight from Gurudev:

Regarding the triple criteria for determining a thing higher than another, Pujya Gurudev gives a valuable insight into subtlety.

According to him subtlety can be measured by *Pervasiveness* alone.

For example, there are solid, liquid and gaseous objects. Gas is the subtlest because it will occupy all the space available to it; solid would be the least subtle. Pervasiveness itself is measured by Pratyakatma or that which is the inner core of a thing, supporting it in the outer environment. This insight relates all three of Shankaracharyaji's criteria to each other, placing them in the order of subtlety, pervasiveness and inner core.

1.3.12: ***Self Seen Only by Subtle Intellect***

एष सर्वेषु भूतेषु गूढोऽऽत्मा न प्रकाशते ।
दृश्यते त्वग्र्यया बुद्ध्या सूक्ष्मया सूक्ष्मदर्शिभिः ॥ १.३.१२॥

ēṣa sarvēṣu bhūtēṣu gūḍhō:':'tmā na prakāśatē |
dṛśyatē tvagryayā buddhyā sūkṣmayā sūkṣmadarśibhiḥ || 1.3.12||

1	*Eshah sarveshu bhooteshu*	*This (Atman) is in all living beings,*
2	*goodhah aatmaa na prakaashate;*	*It is **hidden** there, and not visible (to the eye).*
3	*drishyate tu agryayaa buddhyaa*	*It can indeed be '**seen**' by the **sharp** intellect,*
4	*sookshmayaa sookshma darshibhih.*	*with the **subtle** vision of the seers of the subtle.*

LINK: Explanation on "GOING" & "MOVING"

The Link passage between 3.11/3.12 gives in detail the view that ***"Knowing is Going."*** The going is not physical but in the realm of knowledge. When we move in understanding, we are still in the Self at all times. This going or moving should never be confused with ideas such as going to heaven or hell, which are common among ignorant men. When it is said that "the Self is *reached*" it is a figure of speech only, to enable people to understand the idea from their own level. Words such as 'going', 'moving' and 'reaching' should not be taken literally. They refer to movements in knowledge.

In the Vedas there is a verse which says: *"Those who want to get beyond the ways (of the world) do not walk on roads!"*

Shankaracharyaji explains the apparent contradiction of the Self being hidden in all beings, yet appearing to some. The explanation is summarised here.

"Self Does Not Appear"

1-2 One does not see the Self due to Maya. The compassion of Shankaracharyaji overflows at the suffering of man due to his negligence to take the trouble of knowing the Self. He expresses his sadness in the Bhashya as: "How unfathomable, inscrutable and variegated is Maya, that every creature, although identical with the Self and taught it from a young age, does not grasp it in practice. On the contrary, without being told, it accepts as its Self the non-selves of body and senses. How illogical! Indeed, Maya's deluding power has a firm hold on man in general."

"Self Appears"

3-4 To behold the subtle Self requires purity of the highest type, a subtlety of the intellect. Not all possess this, even among sincere seekers. The Self can be easily seen by the pure. Two qualities are essential for seeing the Self:

i) ***Agryayaa***: "*sharpness*"; this requires *Chitta-Ekagrata* or one-pointedness.
ii) ***Sookshmayaa***: "*subtlety*"; this requires *Chitta-Shuddhi* or purity.

Sookshma Darshibhih: "*seers of the subtle*". A pure and one-pointed mind ensures that the intellect is subtle and sharp enough to be able to discern the Self, not as a physical Presence but as the Reality of one's being, which is also the Reality of all beings. Only a very subtle intellect can grasp the procedure outlined in verses 3.10 and 3.11 of going from the grosser to the subtler all the way up to the Self.

1.3.13: ***Successive Merging from Speech to Self***

यच्छेद्वाङ्मनसी प्राज्ञस्तद्यच्छेज्ज्ञान आत्मनि ।
ज्ञानमात्मनि महति नियच्छेत्तद्यच्छेच्छान्त आत्मनि ॥ १.३.१३॥

yacchēdvāṅmanasī prājñastadyacchējjñāna ātmani |
jñānamātmani mahati niyacchēttadyacchēcchānta ātmani || 1.3.13||

1	*Yachhet vaak manasee praajnah*	*The organ of **speech** should be merged into the mind by the discriminating man;*
2	*tat yachhet jnaane aatmani;*	*Then that **mind** should be merged into the intellect, the knowing self;*
3	*jnaanam aatmani mahati niyachhet*	*Then the **intellect** or knowing self should be merged into the Mahat, the Total Mind;*
4	*tat yachhet shaante aatmani.*	*Finally, that **Mahat**, too, should be merged into the peaceful **Self**.*

The process of tuning oneself more and more to the inner Self is once again repeated from the point of view of a Sadhana to attain the Self. It follows the same lines as already seen in 3.10/11.

Yacchet is the verb which defines the Sadhana needed to be done. It occurs in every Pada.It means dissolve or merge, to withdraw from the grosser into the subtler.

That is the Sadhana. This is done at four levels:

1 ***Dissolve Speech into Mind:*** 'Speech' is used here as an **Upa-Lakshana**, i.e. it stands for *all* the five organs of action in the body of which speech is the first.

All actions stem from a desire in the mind. The desire is not permitted to act itself out. The organs of actions are instructed not to permit any vagaries of the mind to drive the senses. In modern psychology, this is tantamount to *suppression*. Suppression can burst out into rampant, uncontrolled desire-activity if there is nothing to stop the mental energy from damming up from within. At best, it is a temporary necessity, until the mind is trained to check the desires themselves.

2 ***Dissolve Mind into Intellect:*** The desire which remains in the mind, notwithstanding the above external checkpoint, has to be dissolved by the discriminating power of the intellect. The intellect is a controlling power over the irrational mind; hence it is here called the Atman, which has to be taken to mean the controller of the mind.

When desire is checked through Viveka, it is called *sublimation*. This is more desirable than the temporary suppression. The effulgence of the intellect pacifies desire in the mind. Each desire checked in this way adds to the mind's purity.

3 ***Dissolve Intellect into Mahat or Cosmic Intellect:*** The method of checking the intellect itself lies in surrender of one's Ego-sense. This is the most difficult of all operations. Swami Sivananda calls it '*Ego-dectomy*'. The 'I'-thought which originates in the intellect has to be dissolved. When the sense of individuality is thinned out, the individual intellect expands into the Total Intellect. The words in the Bhashya, '*Swacchha-Swabhaavakam-Aatmanah*' tell us that the idea is "*to render the individual intellect as pure and sweet*" as the Total Intellect, whose other name is Hiranyagarbha. When an intellect expands in this way, the hold of the Ego upon it gets completely loosened and dissolved.

4 ***Dissolve the Mahat or "Great Soul" into the Supreme Self:*** This final mergence of the Consciousness into its deepest level of awareness is called Self-realisation. This is characterized by the experience of ***Shanti*** or peacefulness. We note that the intellect with ego cannot directly merge into the Self. As soon as the ego-sense is dissolved, the intellect, which is now identified with the Totality, merges naturally into the deep, universal Being.

Link Passage (to next verse): In an important link, three similes are quoted in the Bhashya to help us understand our real predicament. They are: i) the water of a *mirage*; ii) the *snake* on the rope; and iii) the *dirt* in the sky. Our ignorance or deluded state of the intellect is described in each of these similes:

i) ***The Mirage***: The world is only an *appearance*; it is not really there.

ii) ***The Snake***: Due to fear this appearance makes us resort to all sorts of actions to get rid of a "snake" that is really only a rope.

iii) ***The Dirt***: The ignorance is not our true nature. Just as the sky is unaffected by the dust in the air, so also the Self is really unaffected by the presence of the 'dust' of Karmas accompanying It.

In all three cases, once the real nature of the seen object is understood, the misconception vanishes. In the same way, once the knowledge of one's true nature sets in deeply into our heart, and when purity and one-pointedness are developed, the Self reveals Itself. Peace of mind is enjoyed, and the goal of life is achieved.

Therefore, it is worth making effort to acquire knowledge. The next section gives us a big boost of inspiration to strive hard for this state of peacefulness.

THE GLORY OF THIS JOURNEY

1.3.14: ***A Wake-Up Call From the Wise***

उत्तिष्ठत जाग्रत, प्राप्य वरान्निबोधत ।
क्षुरस्य धारा निशिता दुरत्यया,
दुर्गं पथस्तत्कवयो वदन्ति ॥ १.३.१४॥

uttiṣṭhata jāgrata, prāpya varānnibōdhata |
kṣurasya dhārā niśitā duratyayā
durgaṁ pathastatkavayō vadanti || 1.3.14||

1	*Uttishthata jaagrata*	*"Arise! Awake!*
2	*praapya varaan nibodhata;*	*Having reached the great ones, learn from them!*
3	*kshurasya dhaaraa nishitaa duratyayaa*	*Like the sharp edge of a razor, very difficult to cross,*
4	*durgam pathah tat kavayah vadanti.*	*and hard to tread is the Path!" So say the wise ones.*

The first half (**1-2**) of this verse is not set in any meter. A command is hardly likely to be sung – there is no music in it! It has to come through sharply with urgency and authority.

The second half (**3-4**) is a contrast to the first. It is gentle and melodious, set in meter. Its primary message is to warn us that the path is difficult; it is like treading over the edge of a sharp sword without any shoes. The hidden message is: The spiritual journey of Sreyas is difficult in the beginning but the end is very sweet. In contrast, the path of Preyas is pleasant during the journey, but its fruits are very bitter.

1 A rich insight from Pujya Gurudev explains why 'arise' has been placed before 'awake'. One would expect to awake first and then arise. Here is Gurudev's insight:

"In normal sleep we would awake first and then arise from bed. However, in the case of very deep sleep, one actually gets out of bed, still sleepy, eyes half-opened. Then he goes to the washroom and, only after splashing some water over the eyes, does he really awaken. In the sleep in question, it is not just very deep sleep but the '*sleep of ignorance'* which has been going on for ages. Can there be a deeper sleep than this? For this reason, arise comes before awake." An interesting point, worth noting!

2 Awakening from the slumber of ignorance, what does one do first? Approach the noble teachers – plural because there are different teachers for different types of seekers. We must go to them and ***learn*** how to get out of ignorance once and for all.

3 Going to the teachers is also because it is very difficult to tread this path alone, almost impossible. It is always advisable to walk with somebody who knows the pitfalls. The path is very difficult, indeed, and that is perhaps another reason why it is called *subtle*.

4 And who says that it is tough? They are the wise ones, the saints, those who have been through the grinding mill and know what it is like. Their words have to be taken seriously. If we dismiss them, we do so at our own risk.

The Bhashya suggests a reason why the path is so difficult. It is due to the subtleness of the knowledge of Truth. Because the Truth Itself is so subtle, the qualifications to grasp It are also very subtle. It certainly needs the help of a realized sage to tread it with confidence.

Sri Shankaracharya is one of those "wise ones" to whom we can turn to for light on the Path. His Bhashya says: "Do not take this lightly – it can make all the difference."

The Love of Mother Sruti

The love that Mother Sruti (the scriptures) has for us is like that of a mother.

Acharyaji spoke very inspiringly to us of a mother's love: "Shankaracharyaji loved his mother very greatly. A mother's love is pure selflessness. God could not reach all his children, so He made mothers! The father may try to correct us once and then forget it, but mother will go on correcting us. She is not concerned about what we think of her; she only has our well-being at heart. That is how the scriptures are."

1.3.15: ***Subtlety of the Supreme Self***

अशब्दमस्पर्शमरूपमव्ययं
तथाऽरसं नित्यमगन्धवच्च यत् ।
अनाद्यनन्तं महतः परं ध्रुवं
निचाय्य तन्मृत्युमुखात् प्रमुच्यते ॥ १.३.१५॥

aśabdamasparśamarūpamavyayaṁ
tathā:'rasaṁ nityamagandhavacca yat |
anādyanantaṁ mahataḥ paraṁ dhruvaṁ
nicāyya tanmr̥tyumukhāt pramucyatē || 1.3.15||

1	*Ashabdam asparsham aroopam avyayam*	*That which is soundless, touchless, colourless, undiminishing;*
2	*tathaa arasam nityam agandhavat cha yat;*	*and also tasteless, **Eternal**, and odourless is That.*
3	*anaadi anantam mahatah param dhruvam*	*Without beginning, and without end, distinct from Mahat, and ever constant –*
4	*nichaayya tat mrityu-mukhaat pramuchyate.*	*By knowing That one becomes freed from the jaws of death.*

Link: We have an important Link Passage before this verse. It explains why the knowledge is so subtle. Ordinary gross elements are used as an example so that we understand the *idea* of subtlety. In a gross element, there are the five qualities, namely, smell, taste, form, touch and sound, known through nose, tongue, eye, skin and ear.

We begin with *Earth*, which has all 5 qualities knowable through our 5 senses. Now –

When ***smell*** is removed, we are left with *Water*, which has the remaining 4 qualities.
When ***taste*** is removed, we are left with *Fire*, which has the remaining 3 qualities.
When ***form*** is removed, we are left with *Air*, which has the remaining 2 qualities.
When ***touch*** is removed, we are left with *Space*, which has the remaining 1 quality.
When ***sound*** also is removed, we are out of range of all grossness.

1-2 From the moment we start reducing the number of qualities – *soundless*, *touchless*, *colourless*, *tasteless* and *odourless* – we begin shifting to subtler and subtler levels. It is the properties that cause the grossness. When we come to the Self, it is the subtlest of all 'substances', without any properties. Hence, the Self is extremely difficult to understand with our limited intellect. This is what we have seen in verses 10, 11 and 13.

With this introduction from Shankaracharyaji, we can at least learn to appreciate and grasp how subtle the Self is. Only an intellect that is very subtle and very pure can hope to grasp or 'behold' the Self.

The Self is Nitya

The Bhashya expands greatly in respect of this single quality of the Self being called Nitya or eternal. Three approaches are made to understand what is meant by Nitya.

i) **1-2 Nirguna***: "Self has none of the 5 Properties"* – All five qualities picked up by the five senses are excluded in the Self. When the last quality of sound is taken away from space, what we are left with is beyond our sensory knowledge. There can be no decay in what is left after all properties are removed. Hence that Self is said to be **Nitya**. This is the *first reason*.

ii) **3a** ***Anaadi-Anantam:*** *"Self is Beginningless and Endless"* – A thing has an end when it changes to something else, which then becomes the effect. An example is milk, which is destroyed when it changes into curds. The curds is an effect produced by its cause, the milk. The Self is not like that. It cannot cease existing by changing into something else,

because it is unchanging. It produces no effects. It is also beginningless as it has no Cause. This is the *second reason* why it is *Nitya*.

3b ***Mahatah Param***: as a result of being Anaadi and Anantam, the Self is distinct from the realm of Mahat or the Total Subtle or Hiranyagarbha. Mahat is the point at which begins all creation which has a beginning and an end. The Self is beyond even Mahat. From this viewpoint also, the Self is regarded as Nitya – this is the *third reason*.

iii) **3c** ***Dhruvam:*** *"Changelessly Constant"* – the constancy is not relative like the earth or a river. The earth is constant relatively speaking, but everything in it is undergoing change. A river, too, is relatively constant, for every moment the water at a given point is different from what was there a moment before. The Self's constancy is absolute. It does not change at all, i.e. it is *changelessly constant*. This is the *fourth reason* why it is Nitya.

4 The verse closes by stating the Phala or fruit of realizing the Self. Being "free from the jaws of death" is a graphical way of saying that one attains liberation from the ceaseless round of births and deaths. There is no change with respect to taking different births. When the goal is reached, there is no longer any rebirth or transmigration. This is the *fifth reason* for calling the Self Nitya or changeless.

1.3.16: ***Glory of the "Nachiketas" Knowledge***

नाचिकेतमुपाख्यानं मृत्युप्रोक्तँ सनातनम् ।
उक्त्वा श्रुत्वा च मेधावी ब्रह्मलोके महीयते ॥ १.३.१६॥

nācikētamupākhyānaṁ mṛtyuprōktaṁ̆ sanātanam |
uktvā śrutvā ca mēdhāvī brahmalōkē mahīyatē || 1.3.16||

1	*Naachiketam upaakhyaanam*	*This (Vedic) knowledge as received by Nachiketas,*
2	*mrityu proktam sanaatanam;*	*and as told by the Lord of Death, is eternal;*
3	*uktvaa shrutvaa cha medhaavee*	*relating it or hearing it, the intelligent one*
4	*brahma loke maheeyate.*	*becomes worthy of glorification in the world of Brahman (or in Brahma Loka).*

1 The Pada could be interpreted in two ways:

i) ***Upaakhyaanam***: "*story*". In this case, 'Nachiketas' becomes an adjective to 'story', giving "*The Nachiketas Story*", identifying which story. This is in keeping with the earlier usage of "*The Nachiketas Fire*" where the entire sacrificial fire was named after him.

ii) ***Upaakhyaanam***: the alternative meaning is "*knowledge*". In this case, the Pada could mean either the specific knowledge as taught to Nachiketas by Lord Yama; or that the knowledge is named after him, as "*The Nachiketas Knowledge*".

2 The knowledge (or the story) is "eternal" because it is from the Vedas, which are eternal. The glorification of either is ultimately the glorification of the Vedas itself.

3 The knowledge (or the story) is also glorified by associating it with an intelligent young seeker of exceptional qualities and a pure intellect. As a slight variant, the intelligent student who understands this knowledge is equally glorified in the process.

Acharyaji expressed it with another metaphor: "A good book is a good meal." Knowledge was always greatly respected in Vedic culture.

4 By stating that the fruit of this knowledge is twofold:

i) It can be *Brahman*, the highest Goal of human life, if by knowledge is meant Brahma Vidya, the Knowledge of the Self.

ii) It can be *Brahmaloka*, the highest heavenly region, if the knowledge is taken to mean knowledge of the "Nachiketas Fire Sacrifice".

1.3.17: ***Auspicious Recitation of this Knowledge***

य इमं परमं गुह्यं श्रावयेद् ब्रह्मसंसदि। प्रयतः श्राद्धकाले वा
तदानन्त्याय कल्पते। तदानन्त्याय कल्पत इति ॥ १.३.१७॥

ya imaṁ paramaṁ guhyaṁ śrāvayēd brahmasaṁsadi |
prayataḥ śrāddhakālē vā
tadānantyāya kalpatē | tadānantyāya kalpata iti || 1.3.17||

1	*Yah imam paramam guhyam*	*Should anyone get this highest secret*
2	*shraavayet brahma sam-sadi;*	*recited before an assembly of Brahmanas;*
3	*prayatah shraaddha kaale vaa*	*or at the time of the purificatory rites for the dead,*
4a	*tadaa anantyaaya kalpate;*	*then the recital becomes conducive to eternal fruit;*
4b	*tadaa anantyaaya kalpate iti.*	*indeed, it becomes conducive to eternal fruit!*

1 Special credit is given in this last verse of Part 1 to the active field worker who assists in organizing assemblies of hearers of this knowledge. **2** The recition of this text before an assembly of Brahmanas (i.e. spiritual aspirants seeking the Immortal Truth), or **3** its recitation at a funeral ceremony is especially blessed by Lord Yama. **4** Such recitation programmes are said to take all the people involved with it towards the ultimate Goal – eternal union with Brahman.

At present, absence of this knowledge makes people unnecessarily afraid of Death. When this knowledge is received by more people, they are less likely to meet death with fear. The result will be that the people whom Yama receives will already know the laws of Karma upon which the governance of life on earth is based. Knowing these laws, when Lord Yama finally visits them, people will welcome him, not repel him.

॥ इति काठकोपनिषदि प्रथमाध्याये तृतीया वल्ली ॥

iti kāṭhakōpaniṣadi prathamādhyāyē tr̥tīyā vallī ||

Thus ends the Third Chapter of the First Part of the Katha Upanishad.

*****

कठोपनिषत्–२

KATHA UPANISHAD

Part 2 – Total 49 Verses

Chapters 2.1, 2.2 & 2.3

*****

Chapter 2.1: (15 verses)
THE POWER OF KNOWLEDGE

TWO OBSTACLES TO KNOWLEDGE

SRI SHANKARACHARYAJI INTRODUCES this Chapter with the words: "The subtle Self needs a subtle, sharp and one-pointed intellect to behold It." If that is all that is required, we should all begin working towards this attainment and reach the Goal without delay.

Yes, there is no doubt – that is the correct approach.

However, a little practice and observation of the success rate makes us soon realize that this is easier said than done. What is it that makes it difficult to acquire a sharp and subtle intellect? The fact that such an intellect is so hard to come by indicates that there must be some serious obstacles to acquiring it. Two obstacles are dissected in this first section. Only when we know what they are can we be motivated to remove them

The two obstacles occur in two different spheres: i) the *external* world of the senses; and ii) the *internal* world of the mind.

2.1.1: *First Obstacle: The "Punished" Senses*

पराञ्चि खानि व्यतृणत् स्वयम्भूः
तस्मात्पराङ्पश्यति नान्तरात्मन् ।
कश्चिद्धीरः प्रत्यगात्मानमैक्षद्
आवृत्तचक्षुरमृतत्वमिच्छन् ॥ २.१.१॥

parāñci khāni vyatṛṇat svayambhūḥ
tasmātparāṅpaśyati nāntarātman |
kaściddhīraḥ pratyagātmānamaikṣad
āvṛttacakṣuramṛtatvamicchan || 2.1.1||

1	*Paraanchi khaani vyatrinat swayambhooh*	*"**Outgoing** be thou, O senses!" – thus did the Great Lord **curse** or afflict them.*
2	*tasmaat paraak pashyati na antaraatman;*	*Therefore, one sees the outer things and not the inner Self.*
3	*kashchit dheerah pratyak-aatmaanam aikshat*	*A rare discriminating man arises who **gazes inward** on the Self,*
4	*aavritta chakshuh amritatvam icchhan.*	*turning the gaze of his eyes away from sense objects, and desiring **Immortality**.*

The first major obstacle is mentioned in this verse. It is the **Extroverted Senses**. The overall cause of this is ***Avidya*** or ignorance.

1 ***Vyatrinat***: *"afflict" or "curse".* The Rishi speaks of the senses as having a *manufacturer's defect*. He argues, with tongue in cheek, that we are manufactured with this fault – with senses turned outwards. It cannot be helped. It is not our fault!

2 The irony continues. The man of weak will says, "We can hardly be blamed for not seeing the Self! After all, God has made our senses turned outwards; it is not actually our fault at all. It is the nature of the senses to lead our mind outwards and engage it with the outer world. They are made like that to fulfill their purpose. We are made to enjoy sense pleasures. Why should we be asked to restrain our senses?"

That is as far as we can go with thye irony. The curse is, of course, not to be taken literally; it is only a euphemism, a mild way of expressing the blunt fact we do not wish to control our senses. Our leaning towards pleasure is incorrigible.

3 To recognize this defect is possible only through the rare quality of discrimination by which the temporary nature of sense objects is understood and a "U-turn" is made to turn our attention inward. This is the most critical step that begins the spiritual quest. One who has such a subtle intellect is called a ***Dheerah***. He is able to turn the senses inwards towards the ***Pratyak Atman*** (the indwelling Self).

4 The reference to 'turning the eyes away' should be taken to mean turning all the five senses away, not just the eyes. It is not possible to behold the Self and the objects together. In this context, *Vairagya* or Dispassion is called for. Vairagya may be defined as the desire for the higher which makes us willingly give up the lower. The senses always want to be tickled and the mind gets habituated to the tickling. The mind is thus assisted by the senses to turn outwards regardless of what the intellect tells it. But when Vairagya dawns, the whole process is reversed.

The question is asked: "Why does the wise man practise Vairagya, which is such an enormously difficult task?" The answer is: "It is purely because of his desire to attain *Immortality*." Immortality means putting an end to the cycle of births and deaths once and for all. Freedom from this endless cycle is what the seeker desires, and that is what makes him practise Vairagya to attain mastery over his senses and mind.

Use of 'Atman' for the Indwelling Self:

[This portion is only of interest to very technically minded students. Others can move on to the next verse at this point.]

A verse is quoted in the Bhashya from which four meanings arise for the word 'Atman'. The verse is:

"Since It pervades ***(Yachaapnoti)****, absorbs* ***(Yadaadatte)****, and expands and enters* ***(Yacchaatti)*** *all objects in the world, and since from It the world derives its continuous existence* ***(Yacchaasya)****."*

Acharyaji explained all the four roots of the above verbs used in deriving the meaning of 'Atman'.

i) ***'Aap' in Yachaapnoti*** – to pervade. When we arise in the morning, we shift from a state of 'coiled up' or withdrawn consciousness of deep sleep into a state in which our consciousness expands throughout our body.

ii) ***'Daa' in Yadaadatte*** – to hold or absorb. That into which everything is absorbed or which holds all our experiences is the indwelling Self.

iii) ***'At' in Yacchaatti*** – that which expands and enters everything is the inner Self.

iv) ***'As' in Yacchaasya*** – that which has a continuous presence is also the Self.

This explains the appropriateness of using the word *Atman* for the inner Self.

Another technical correction made is changing ***Aikshat*** from past tense to present tense – "saw" to "sees". This is more correct since the seeing can still be done even now.

2.1.2: *Second Obstacle: The Mind's Thirst for Pleasure*

पराचः कामाननुयन्ति बाला-
स्ते मृत्योर्यन्ति विततस्य पाशम् ।
अथ धीरा अमृतत्वं विदित्वा
ध्रुवमध्रुवेष्विह न प्रार्थयन्ते ॥ २.१.२॥

parācaḥ kāmānanuyanti bālā-
stē mr̥tyōryanti vitatasya pāśam |
atha dhīrā amr̥tatvaṁ viditvā
dhruvamadhruvēṣviha na prārthayantē || 2.1.2||

1	*Paraachah kaamaan anuyanti baalaah*	***External pleasures*** *are pursued by "children" (immature ones);*
2	*te mrityoh yanti vitatasya paasham;*	*they fall into death's widespread snares.*
3	*atha dheeraah amritatvam viditvaa*	*But* ***the brave*** *and mature ones, have the knowledge of Immortality,*
4	*dhruvam adhruveshu iha na praartha-yante.*	*i.e. what is Eternal amidst the non-Eternal. They do not desire anything of this world.*

The second obstacle is brought into the discussion here, namely, **Trishna** or thirst for external objects of desire. In the Link passage to this verse, the Bhashya clearly identifies Avidya and Trishna as the two obstacles to God-vision.

1 ***Baalaah***: "*children; the immature or ignorant ones*". The connotation is the unintelligent persons, the 'children' who still wishes to play with the toys offered by the world. Such persons get trapped by the snares of sense objects. When objects are known to give pleasure, they are sought again and again. This is how children behave.

2 Where does this lead such 'children'? – into the widespread nets of Death. 'Death' here has its widest meaning – not just the death of this birth, but the deaths of endless cycles of rebirths to which they are condemned due to being slaves of Desire.

The vicious cycle of the *Desire Lineage* is "*Avidya, Kama, Karma Samudaya*", i.e. the group of Ignorance, Desire and Action, as the Bhashya puts it. The words Samyoga – Viyoga, meaning 'union and disunion', are used in place of birth and death. The individual soul constantly unites and disunites with a physical body.

3-4 ***Dheeraah***: "*the intelligent, mature persons*" are the very opposite of the children. They know through discrimination that objects are impermanent. They see that which is immortal amidst the mortal objects. Hence they turn their attention inwards to the

Self, which is the immortal aspect of their being. Freeing themselves from Avidya and Trishna, they focus their minds on the stable, all-pervading Self within.

The verb ***Vyuttishthanti,*** *"they rise above",* is aptly used in the Bashya. It expresses the idea that the *Dheerah* or wise man has raised his awareness to the Self, high above the desires for progeny, wealth and pleasures, and thus is not attracted by the sense world even though he may be living in the midst of it. That is how he succeeds.

INTELLECT – INDIVIDUAL INTELLIGENCE

Nachiketas's third boon is now being answered directly. The Self, which Nachiketas asked about, is being explained in three verses from the level of the individual human intellect as the *Knowing Principle*. We begin with its involvement with the senses.

2.1.3: ***The Cogniser of Sense Experiences***

येन रूपं रसं गन्धं शब्दान् स्पर्शांश्च मैथुनान् ।
एतेनैव विजानाति किमत्र परिशिष्यते । एतद्वै तत् ॥ २.१.३॥

yēna rūpaṁ rasaṁ gandhaṁ śabdān sparśāṁśca maithunān |
ētēnaiva vijānāti kimatra pariśiṣyatē |
ētadvai tat || 2.1.3||

1	*Yena roopam rasam gandham*	*By whatever form, taste, smell,*
2	*shabdaan sparshaan cha maithunaan;*	*sound, touch and sexual joy one encounters –*
3	*etena eva vijaanaati*	*it is by That alone that they are cognized.*
4	*kim atra parishishyate.*	*What is there unknowable to That in this world?*
5	***Etat vai tat.***	***This is verily That*** *(This is the Mahavakya of this text)!*

The Sense Experience

1-2 The five senses can be experienced individually or in combination with each other. A unique experience of all five senses combined together occurs in sexual union, which is why it has been specifically added to the list. Who is the experiencer of these?

3 It is the Self which experiences all the objects through the senses. The real Knower of this world of objects is the inner Experiencer, the Self.

4 There is nothing that is unknowable to the Self, as It is Consciousness itself.

5 This line is the **Mahavakya** or statement of identity of the *Katha Upanishad*,.

The Bhashya raises the possibility of an objection to this statement: "When we experience the objects, we do so through the mind and the body. How can we say that it is experienced by another factor called Self? There can be no such thing."

The reply given to this is that the body itself is one of the *objects* of the world. It is part of the "Shabda, Sparsha, etc" sense experience. It cannot know itself. There has to be another entity that knows it – that entity is the Self, through the human intellect.

2.1.4: ***Witness of the Three States***

स्वप्नान्तं जागरितान्तं चोभौ येनानुपश्यति ।
महान्तं विभुमात्मानं मत्वा धीरो न शोचति ॥ २.१.४॥

svapnāntaṁ jāgaritāntaṁ cōbhau yēnānupaśyati |
mahāntaṁ vibhumātmānaṁ matvā dhīrō na śōcati || 2.1.4||

1	*Svapna antam jaagarita aantam*	*The objects of dream and those of waking state,*
2	*cha ubhau yena anu-pashyati;*	*are both perceived by That*
3	*mahaantam vibhum aatmaanam*	*great, omnipresent Aatman or Self .*
4	*matvaa dheerah na shochati.*	*Having realized this, the wise man grieves not.*

The Bhashya Link explains that the subtlety of the Self is explained from different standpoints in these three verses, in answer to Nachiketas's third boon.

1-2 This verse presents the Self as the Witness of the three states of waking, dream and deep sleep. The deep sleep state is not mentioned as no objects are perceived in it. The perceiver is indicated as being the Self.

3-4 The wise man, who realizes that he himself is none other than the all-pervading Self, loses all fear by virtue of this fact of omnipresence. Since there is nothing to fear, there is nothing to grieve over. This is one of the effects of being in the Non-dual state.

2.1.5: ***Keeper of Karmic Accounts***

य इमं मध्वदं वेद आत्मानं जीवमन्तिकात् ।
ईशानं भूतभव्यस्य न ततो विजुगुप्सते । एतद्वै तत् ॥ २.१.५॥

ya imaṁ madhvadaṁ vēda ātmānaṁ jīvamantikāt |
īśānaṁ bhūtabhavyasya na tatō vijugupsatē |
ētadvai tat || 2.1.5||

1	*yah imam madhvadam veda*	*He who knows that the enjoyer of this honey*
2	*aatmaanam jeevam antikaat;*	*is one's own dear Atman, the sustainer of his life,*
3	*eeshaanam bhoota-bhavyasya*	*the Lord of the past and the future,*
4	*na tatah vijugupsate.*	*no more thereafter does he "wish to save himself".*

Nachiketas, in verse 1.2.14, re-phrased his third boon. He asked about the Self which is "beyond virtue and vice, beyond cause and effect, and beyond past and future". That aspect of the Self is now being answered by Lord Yama.

1 ***Madhvadam:*** "*enjoyer of honey*"; this word has been effectively chosen to summarise all enjoyment through the sense objects. Like bees gathering honey, we gather Karma, merit or demerit, for our enjoyment. Paapa and Punya is a result of the Karma we perform to acquire merit. 'Honey' represents this Paapa and Punya connected to 'virtue and vice'. It draws the distinction between Dharma and Adharma. The Self is beyond both Dharma and Adharma. That is the significance of the "*honey*" we collect and enjoy.

2 ***Antikaat***: "*as one very near or close*". This word tells us how close and dear the Self is to us as the sustainer of our very life.

3 ***Bhoota-Bhavyasya***: "*past and future*". The Self is also the Lord of Time, meaning that He transcends Time. The Self is not in the realm of Time. This relates to Nachiketas's reference to cause and effect, as well as past and future. The Self is beyond both of these, but when conditioned as the intellect, it experiences these due to the Karma it has accumulated through its deeds. The Pure Self is unaffected by them.

4 ***Vijugupsate***: Knowing himself to be that Self, the wise person does not have any desire "*to save or protect oneself*", as he has no more fear. Fear only comes when we see duality, when there is 'another'. One who has a purified intellect is freed from the Upadhis of body and mind, and does not see anything different from his own vast spiritual Being. He has the Non-dual vision by which he sees unity in all creation.

We now move on to a macroscipic glimpse of the Self through **Hiranyagarbha**.

BRAHMAN (The Supreme Reality)
1. Brahman at Causal Level
⇨ **ISHWARA (when viewed through MAYA)**
⇨ **THE UNMANIFESTED**
⇨ **JIVA (when viewed through AVIDYA)**
2. Brahman at Subtle Level
⇨ **HIRANYAGARBHA**
⇨ **THE "THRESHOLD"**
⇨ **THE SUBTLE ELEMENTS**
⇨ **THE SUBTLE CREATION (Ego, Mind, Intellect, Prana, Senses)**
3. Brahman at Gross Level
⇨ **VIRAT**
⇨ **THE MANIFESTED**
⇨ **THE GROSS ELEMENTS**
⇨ **THE GROSS CREATION (the 14 Worlds, Bodies)**

Table: THE COSMIC HIERARCHY

HIRANYAGARBHA – TOTAL INTELLIGENCE

Verses **6-8** explain the implication of the all-pervading form of the Self, that is, its influence beyond our individuality, how it influences all beings and things in the Cosmos. Specific Vedantic terms are given in the above hierarchy, which are explained below.

Verses 6 and 7 speak of the Self as **Hiranyagarbha**, the consciousness associated with the Cosmic Subtle Body. Verse 8 speaks of the Self as **Virat**, the consciousness associated with the Cosmic Gross Body.

Hindu philosophy has a wide vision of the Supreme Reality. The Western term 'God' does not do justice to denote the full scope of Reality, hence we use the term **Brahman**.

The cosmic hierarchy stretches from Brahman to the gross creation. We see that Hiranyagarbha is at the pivot of this hierarchy. She is at the "*threshold*" between the Unmanifested and Manifested.

A table relating all the verses that follow is given below:

THERE	2.1.9 2.1.10	2.1.12 2.1.13	2.1.14 2.1.15	**Brahman**	*The Supreme Self*
HERE	2.1.6 2.1.8	2.1.7 2.1.11		**Hiranyagarbha** **Virat**	*The Cosmic Womb (Prana)* *Fire; the gross objects*

Table: RELATING VERSES 2.1.6 to 15

2.1.6 & 7: ***Hiranyagarbha – Brahman in Subtle Creation***

यः पूर्वं तपसो जातमद्भ्यः पूर्वमजायत ।
गुहां प्रविश्य तिष्ठन्तं यो भूतेभिर्व्यपश्यत । एतद्वै तत् ॥ २.१.६॥

या प्राणेन संभवत्यदितिर्देवतामयी ।
गुहां प्रविश्य तिष्ठन्तीं या भूतेभिर्व्यजायत । एतद्वै तत् ॥ २.१.७॥

yaḥ pūrvaṁ tapasō jātamadbhyaḥ pūrvamajāyata |
guhāṁ praviśya tiṣṭhantaṁ yō bhūtēbhirvyapaśyata |
ētadvai tat || 2.1.6||

yā prāṇēna saṁbhavatyaditirdēvatāmayī |
guhāṁ praviśya tiṣṭhantīṁ yā bhūtēbhirvyajāyata |
ētadvai tat || 2.1.7||

1	*Yah poorvam tapasah jaatam*	*He is the "first-born" of the Austerity of Brahmaji;*
2	*adbhyah poorvam ajaayata;*	*He is born prior to the five elements (waters);*
3	*guhaam pravishya tishthantam*	*He enters and takes his seat in the heart cavity,*
4	*yah bhootebhih vyapashyata.*	*in the midst of the elements – He now truly 'Sees'.*
5	***Etat vai tat.***	***This is verily That!***

6	*Yaa praanena sambhavati*	*It is She (Hiranyagarbha) from whom Prana is born;*
7	*aditih devataa-mayee;*	*She is the Enjoyer in the form of the Devas;*
8	*guhaam pravishya tishthanteem*	*She enters and takes her seat in the heart cavity,*
9	*yaa bhootebhih vyajaayata.*	*in the midst of the elements – She is now truly 'born'.*
10	***Etat vai tat.***	***This is verily That!***

These two verses are near 'identical twins', as it were. **v 2.1.6** views Hiranyagarbha from the perspective of Brahman, while **v 2.1.7** views it from our human perspective as creatures on earth. Hence, in slightly different ways, both describe how Hiranyagarbha can be looked up to as nothing but Brahman Himself in a conditioned form.

The Upanishad is here pushing us forward to the Truth that Brahman in manifestation is no less than the Pure Brahman in isolation.

We discuss the two verses together, taking corresponding lines from each of them.

1 & **6** ***Yah*** (m) & ***Yaa*** (f): "*He (She) who*". Both refer to Hiranyagarbha, the subject. The male gender is used from Brahman's standpoint, and the female gender from creation's standpoint. To creation, Hiranyagarbha is "Mother", creation's "Womb" out of which creation emerged. She is Brahman in association with the subtle conditionings of Creation.

Poorvam Jaatam: "*the First Born*"; and ***Praanena Sambhavati***: "*from whom Prana is born*". The first step in creation is the willing or Austerity of Brahman. The Tapasvin in Brahman, called **Ishwara**, combines with the creative power called **Maya** at the Causal level. The first fruit of this union is **Hiranyagarbha**, meaning "Cosmic Womb", at the Subtle level, who represents the female potential to produce creation.

Hiranyagarbha thus comes to be known as the "*First Born*", since all that is ever born is born through her 'umbilical cord', as it were. This is from Brahman's standpoint.

From the standpoint of human beings, immediately beyond the gross body we see a Life-Force in control and enlivening the body. That Life-Force is termed *Prana* in the Vedas. Prana or the Life Principle is the closest "God" in relation to the body, which is why ***Antikaat*** ("*very close*") was used in verse 5. Prana to us is as good as Hiranyagarbha.

2 & **7** ***Adbhyah Poorvam:*** "*prior to the five subtle elements*". From Brahman's standpoint, this clarifies exactly what "First-Born" refers to. In the hierarchy, Hiranyagarbha is *after* Ishwara but *before* the creation of the Adbhyah or five Tanmatras or subtle elements. Adbhyah literally means "the waters from which creation arose".

From the standpoint of man, the representation of Prana continues. Here, the term ***Aditi*** is significant. It means "*the eater or enjoyer*", and is used in place of Hiranyagarbha who as Prana or life-force is seen to be the enjoyer through the body. In this sense, all the Deities would be included as being under the control of Hiranyagarbha.

3 & **8** ***Guhaam Pravishya***: The entry of Consciousness is described identically in both verses. In fact, the entry of Brahman is by definition as *Hiranyagarbha*, the consciousness associated with the subtle creation. Wherein did she enter? The ***Guha*** or cave, the very core of our being, is the intellect. It is called the "*cavity of the heart*". That is where Consciousness enters the human being and establishes its 'residence'.

Once Hiranyagarbha takes His seat, all the Deities in charge of the different functions of the body take up their respective residences in the organs and senses that they govern.

> ***The main idea conveyed through these facts is to tell us that the very elements from which the mind, intellect and gross body are created, are to be seen as nothing short of the Self. For the Self indwells all of them.***

4 & **9** Consciousness gets associated with 'the elements', meaning it gets associated with the living being through the intellect. From Brahman's standpoint, this entry is as the 'Seer' (***Vyapashyata***) or Witness of all that is experienced by the Jiva. From the Jiva's standpoint, the entry of Consciousness is seen as 'birth' (***Vyajaayata***).

Seeing Hiranyagarbha as the Self is explained by a simile. In the garden of Brahman there are many plants. All may be looked upon and revered as Brahman Himself.

5 & **10** *The Mahavakya*: In conclusion, the whole subtle world is to be seen as God. The subtle world specifically refers to all living creatures. It is in the living creatures that God manifests in a special way with the subtle body equipment of mind, Prana and senses.

2.1.8: ***Hiranyagarbha's Worship in Virat***

अरण्योर्निहितो जातवेदा गर्भ इव सुभृतो गर्भिणीभिः ।
दिवे दिवे ईड्यो जागृवद्भिर्हविष्मद्भिर्मनुष्येभिरग्निः ।
एतद्वै तत् ॥ २.१.८॥

araṇyōrnihitō jātavēdā garbha iva subhṛtō garbhiṇībhiḥ |
divē divē īḍyō jāgṛvadbhirhaviṣmadbhirmanuṣyēbhiragniḥ |
ētadvai tat || 2.1.8||

1	*Aranyoh nihitah jaata-vedaah*	*Lodged between two pieces of wood (known as the Arani), is the **Fire of Knowledge** that signifies omniscience.*
2	*garbhah iva subhritah garbhineebhih;*	*It is like a **foetus** that is well-protected (nourished), there in the womb of pregnant women.*
3a 3b	*dive dive eedyah jaagrivadbhih*	*Day by day, it is **carefully tended** and adored (worshipped) i) by the sleepless one (the awakened **Jnani** in his contemplations);*
4	*havishmadbhih manushyebhih agnih.*	*ii) by the offerers of oblations (the devout **householders**); and iii) by the men (**Upasakas**) who worship the '(Nachiketas) Fire'.*
5	***Etat vai tat.***	***This is verily That!***

Three types of worshippers (see **3b-4**) utilise some means or other from the realm of Hiranyagarbha and Virat, to worship Brahman, the Supreme.

The Symbolism of the Foetus in the Womb

1 ***Aranyoh***: In Vedic times, sacrificial fires were lit in a specially made instrument called an *Arani*, which had two pieces of wood, an upper one which was churned and the lower one with a cup in which the upper piece was rotated to produce a fire by friction.

2-3a There is a "double-simile" used here. The first simile is the *Arani Fire* which represents Brahman, the ultimate object of worship for all three worshippers. This Fire itself is described by a second simile, the *human foetus* in the mother's womb. The protective care provided by a pregnant woman to her foetus is compared to the care with which the fire in an Arani is carefully tended from a small, easily extinguishable spark to a full-blown flame within the Arani, and then transferred with equal care to start the sacrificial fire in the *havan kund*. This is done day after day with great devotion and feeling, just as the mother takes care of her yet-to-be-born child. This second simile is remarkably appropriate to show the love that inflames the worshipper's heart.

3b-4 A comparison may be drawn between this verse and **v 1.3.1**. In both verses mention is made in the same order of all three types of worshippers of the Self, namely, i) the Brahma Jnanis; ii) the devout householders; and iii) the Upasakass who light the 'Nachiketas Fire Sacrifice'.

5 This is the line that is repeated in this Upanishad as its **Mahavakya**.

THE SYMBOLISM OF FIRE

Agni or Fire carries very auspicious symbolism. It stands for purity, austerity, and rigorous spiritual practice. Whether it is in the practice of meditation performed by advanced Jnanis, or in performing the fire sacrifice, purity, austerity and rigour are the virtues attached to them in all three cases.

Yogis spend many hours daily in vigilance to control their thoughts. This is an austerity comparable to fire. The *havan kund* represents the heart of the meditator, i.e. the intellect. All care and attention is given to nurture the fire of meditation as is given to nurture the Arani fire or the foetus in the mother's womb.

Fire is also the "postman" in Vedic rituals. It delivers our request or prayer to the respective Deities.

The worship of Fire is at two levels – the *Adhiyajna* and *Adhyatma*, i.e. the Divine in the Universe and the Divine within our heart. The Upasaka doing rituals does them with an external result in mind; whereas the Yogi engaged in meditation does it with no desire except the desire to be united with God.

*****

THE USE OF VIRAT IN WORSHIP

Fire represents form and colour. Among the gross elements, it is the subtlest that is visible to humans. (Space and Air cannot be seen.) Hence Fire stands for the entire gross manifestation of the universe. **Virat** is the Consciousness or Brahman that is associated with this manifestation. In addition to the symbolism of fire, the *fire sacrifice* itself stands as a symbol for spiritual Sadhana. It represents the worshipper's intention to work in harmony with the Deities who govern various functions at the gross level of Creation.

This verse can be taken to mean that the whole of Virat, the gross manifestation, has to be considered as being nothing but Brahman Himself. The same applied earlier to Hiranyagarbha. Now the Upanishad extends the idea to include even Virat to stand for Brahman alone.

The Vedic view of life at the physical level is that it is an expression of the Divine. The Divine is seen as both *imminent* as well as *transcendent.* He is in the gross as well as the subtle, and beyond even the subtle. The gross manifestation, when seen as God, is cared for just as carefully as a foetus in the mother's womb, or the delicate flames arising in the Arani.

The idea conveyed is that *Nature* is to be revered and seen as a god-given gift for our sustenance, with the purpose of promoting our spiritual evolution. Nature is seen as a field for our spiritual growth. It has to be used for good purposes, not abused.

BRAHMAN – ABSOLUTE INTELLIGENCE

2.1.9: ***Brahman – the Ultimate Support***

यतश्चोदेति सूर्योऽस्तं यत्र च गच्छति ।
तं देवाः सर्वेऽर्पितास्तदु नात्येति कश्चन ।
एतद्वै तत् ॥ २.१.९॥

yataścōdēti sūryō:'staṁ yatra ca gacchati |
taṁ dēvāḥ sarvē:'rpitāstadu nātyēti kaścana |
ētadvai tat || 2.1.9||

1	*Yatah cha udeti sooryah*	***That*** *from which the Sun (Hiranyagarbha) arises,*
2	*astam gacchhati yatra cha;*	*and into which it merges or sets –*
3	*tam devaah sarve arpitaah*	***That*** *upon which depend (are fixed) all the Deities.*
4	*tat u na atyeti kashchana.*	*None ever transcends* ***That,*** *(the Supreme* ***Brahman****).*
5	***Etat vai tat.***	***This is verily That!***

We are now closing in on our main subject of discussion, Brahman, which is the answer to Nachiketas's third boon. This is the knowledge for which Nachiketas spurned all the wealth and pleasure he was offered. This verse begins to point out directly the supremacy of Brahman over the whole hierachy of Creation.

1-2 ***Udeti Sooryah, Astam Gachhati***: "*the rising and setting Sun*". Notwithstanding the fact that the sun actually never rises or sets, but it is the earth that spins around, still we see it as rising and setting. The Rishi uses this as a simile. The sun represents everything that emerges from the womb of Hiranyagarbha. In Indian cosmology, creation and dissolution are two cyclical events just as day and night are. Day represents creation and night destruction.

3 ***Devaah***: "*the Devas*". All the Deities are assistants of the Sun, who is Hiranyagarbha. If even Hiranyagarbha takes his origin from Brahman and finally dissolves into Brahman, then what to speak of all his assistant Deities. All of them depend on their existence as well as power, capacities and abilities on Brahman.

We on Earth who are much lower in the hierarchy than all the Deities depend at most times on them to obtain special favours. Our dependency is much more than that of the Deities. Our dependency is not even mentioned in this verse. It is taken for granted.

Another way to look at our dependency on Brahman is to think of ourselves as objects in creation which are *fixed* onto Brahman just as gems are fixed on a string to produce a necklace, or as a stamp is fixed on an envelope. All the elements, the objects and beings are *fixed* on Brahman.

4 There is nothing that is higher than the Supreme Brahman. At the same time, there is nothing *other than* Brahman! The only sensible conclusion we can draw from this is: The one Lord who is seen to be the entire subtle creation (verses 4.6 and 4.7), is also at the heart of the entire gross creation. Brahman is not just transcendental or beyond this creation, but wholly immanent in every part of creation.

5 The great truth emerging from all this is that the Supreme Being, Brahman, can be contacted in and through His Creation! The Mahavakya is repeated yet again.

2.1.10: ***Brahman is Both "Here" & "There"***

यदेवेह तदमुत्र यदमुत्र तदन्विह ।
मृत्योः स मृत्युमाप्नोति य इह नानेव पश्यति ॥ २.१.१०॥

yadēvēha tadamutra yadamutra tadanviha |
mṛtyōḥ sa mṛtyumāpnōti ya iha nānēva paśyati || 2.1.10||

1	*Yat eva iha tat amutra*	*Whatever indeed is here, is there;*
2	*yat amutra tat anu iha;*	*whatever is there, is likewise here.*
3	*mrityoh sah mrityum aapnoti*	*He goes from death to death (transmigrates)*
4	*yah iha naanaa iva pashyati.*	*who sees any difference between 'there' and 'here'.*

1-2 The human tendency is to differentiate and categorise things in the process of getting to know them. This tendency makes it difficult for the Vedantin to put across the idea that in the matter of Brahman one cannot do this. Brahman is Non-dual and therefore cannot be differentiated. He can only be known as one homogenous Whole.

He is both "*there*" and "*here*"; He is in the Unconditioned state and the Conditioned state respectively; He is transcendent as well as immanent respectively; He is beyond as well as within creation.

Here: Refers to what is close to us, this physical world, our gross body, something already attained, the Jiva or individual soul. It is the Gantru or "the goer" or "traveller".

There: Refers to what is far away from us, namely, the higher worlds up to Brahman, the Divine Being that is to be attained, the Supreme Brahman or Satchidananda. It is the Gantavya or "the destination".

'Here' and the 'There' could also mean the microcosm (Vyashthi) and the macrocosm (Samasthi). The word 'Iva', meaning "as though" conveys the idea that here and there are imaginary divisions. We do not have to go far to find ourselves – we are right *here!*

3-4 The conclusion is that seeing Plurality by seeing differences between here and there, is *sufficient cause* for continuing endlessly in this cycle of births and deaths. In Yama's language, it is not 'from birth to death', but 'from death to death'. Lord Yama, the Lord of Death, must have done a course in Advertising!

2.1.11: ***Mind – Centre-Stage for Sadhana***

मनसैवेदमाप्तव्यं नेह नानाऽस्ति किंचन ।
मृत्योः स मृत्युं गच्छति य इह नानेव पश्यति ॥ २.१.११॥

manasaivēdamāptavyaṁ nēha nānā:'sti kiṁcana |
mr̥tyōḥ sa mr̥tyuṁ gacchati ya iha nānēva paśyati || 2.1.11||

1	*Manasaa eva idam aaptavyam*	*This is to be attained through the mind alone.*
2	*na iha naanaa asti kinchana;*	*There is no diversity here whatsoever.*
3	*mrityoh sah mrityum gacchhati*	*He goes from death to death,*
4	*yah iha naanaa iva pashyati.*	*who sees any difference between 'there' and 'here',*

1 There are statements in the Srutis which may appear to contradict the assertion made here that the whole Sadhana is attained through the mind. Elsewhere we are told that the Self is attained only when the mind is transcended.

The mind is the centre-stage for the Sadhana to lead us to the Self. With the help and co-operation of the mind, we can quieten it, purify it and *then* go beyond it. We look at two aspects of the mind's annihilation:

1. Through Training & Discipline: Pujya Gurudev has a fitting answer to this doubt: "This is no contradiction. When Sruti says that mind is the only vehicle, she only means that the mind is to be trained through its controlled and regulated application to minimize its activities to a zero, when it dies off itself. The process of 'mind annihilation' is to be achieved not through a *murder* but through a *suicide*! However great the Guru may be, and however powerful the scriptures be, they cannot bring about the final ending of the mind unless the seeker is ready to end it himself, and by his own efforts."

2. Through Obtaining Knowledge: This aspect has to precede the previous one. The training and disciple requires knowledge of the Self. This knowledge has to be obtained by the intellect. Then the knowledge is used to take us beyond the mind. Without knowledge, it is of no use training the mind and bringing it to a thought-free state, as we would not know what to do with it thereafter.

Acharyaji summed this up as: "In duality, get the knowledge of Non-duality, and then go beyond duality." One does not actually 'go' anywhere to attain it – it is our own Self.

2 When the Self is attained, diversity (Duality) has to leave – lock, stock and barrel! When Light enters, darkness has to go, every trace of it. The Bhashya emphatically states that not even a trace of Plurality can remain.

Acharyaji added an example here. The Sankhya philosophy dwindles duality down to just two principles, namely, Prakriti and Purusha. Not even this minimal duality of the Sankhyas can remain when the Self is realized. The corollary to this is that Avidya will continue till the last drop of Duality is dissolved.

3-4 Repetition is part of Lord Yama's advertising skills!

TWO SCHOOLS OF VEDANTIC THOUGHT

At this point, Acharyaji taught us the key differences within Advaita Vedantins themselves. The two schools of thought are called Bhamati and Vivarna. Sri Adi Shankaracharyaji teaches from the Vivarna school, but recognizes that the goal of both is the same, and that both approaches are effective, depending on the type of student:

i) **Bhamati:** considers the mind to be one of the senses; by doing so it considers that Nididhyasana, and not Sravana, is what brings knowledge.

ii) **Vivarna:** considers Sravana, a mind function, to be the means for obtaining knowledge; Nididhyasana then firmly establishes it.

THE KEY ROLE OF THE MIND

Acharyaji gave us the following insight into the key role of the mind in Sadhana:

The mind is brought to single-pointed focus, achieved through **Chitta Shuddhi** and **Chitta Ekagrata** (purity and clarity). In this state it withdraws of its own accord from the external Upadhis which bind it. This done, it then has to hand itself over to the Self. It needs to understand thoroughly the knowledge of the Self before it can make this total surrender. It has to learn to see itself as only a *"flutter of Consciousness"*.

When the mind gives up anything, it gets rest. For example, when we stop its outgoing nature, it soon accepts it and adjusts to it happily. The mind that is trained in this manner eventually dissolves into its own nature of pure consciousness. This process is called the dissolution of the mind, as opposed to the destruction of the mind. Dissolution is enabled in the process called Nididhyasana or meditation. The mind's surrender to the Self occurs at the threshold of this process.

The process may be summarised as follows: The journey of Self-knowledge is a journey taken by the mind, through the mind, and out of the mind into Oneness. The teaching on Oneness is the very heart of Vedanta. It is Advaita's unique gift to the world. It is the rock-bottom strength of the Hindu religion.

2.1.12 & 13: ***Upasana*: The "Thumb-Sized" Brahman**

अङ्गुष्ठमात्रः पुरुषो मध्य आत्मनि तिष्ठति ।
ईशानं भूतभव्यस्य न ततो विजुगुप्सते । एतद्वै तत् ॥ २.१.१२॥

अङ्गुष्ठमात्रः पुरुषो ज्योतिरिवाधूमकः ।
ईशानो भूतभव्यस्य स एवाद्य स उ श्वः । एतद्वै तत् ॥ २.१.१३॥

aṅguṣṭhamātraḥ puruṣō madhya ātmani tiṣṭhati |
īśānaṁ bhūtabhavyasya na tatō vijugupsatē |
ētadvai tat || 2.1.12||

aṅguṣṭhamātraḥ puruṣō jyōtirivādhūmakaḥ |
īśānō bhūtabhavyasya sa ēvādya sa u śvaḥ |
ētadvai tat || 2.1.13||

1	*Angushtha-maatrah purushah*	*The Purusha of the size of a thumb*
2	*madhye aatmani tishthati;*	*resides in the middle (core) of the body.*
3	*eeshaanah bhoota bhavyasya*	*He is the Lord of the past and future –*
4	*na tatah vijugupsate.*	*knowing Him one does not fear thereafter.*
5	***Etat vai tat.***	***This is verily That!***

6	*Angushtha-maatrah purushah*	*The Purusha of the size of a thumb*
7	*jyotih iva adhoomakah;*	*is like a light without smoke.*
8	*eeshaanah bhoota bhavyasya*	*He is the Lord of the past and future –*
9	*sah eva adya sa u shvah.*	*He exists today, and He will exist tomorrow.*
10	***Etat vai tat.***	***This is verily That!***

Upasana or Contemplation

The word *Contemplation* is used generally in the sense of an **Upasana**, using some external prop or support, either visual or audible. The word *Meditation* is used in the sense of uniting with the Self in Samadhi using no external prop, and thereafter going on to Nirvikalpa Samadhi. The difference is one of gaining more proficiency in the practice.

In these two verses, an Upasana exercise is being taught. One learns to focus his mind on a fixed point within the body. It may be an object like the "*Thumb-sized Purusha*", or it may be a point of light – "*without smoke*" could be a touch of intended humour, referring to the lighting of *bidis*, or home-made cigarettes by the Sadhu community!

Clearly, the words need neither be taken literally nor precisely – that the Self is "*thumb-sized*", or a "*light without smoke*" or it is "*seated*" in this physical body. These are means by which the trainee, the Upasaka, is introduced to the practice of Upasana. As he progresses, the supports are dropped, and proper meditation begins.

The symbols used can vary considerably. In the *Narayana Sukta* we come across a symbol for the heart as an inverted lotus. We have the symbol "OM", audible as well as visual, serving the same purpose. People from different cultures choose their own symbols. There is a whole *family* of symbols. The reader should not be confused and give up what he may already be using in his own practice. The idea is quite universal.

2.1.14: ***Dispersion Into Plurality***

यथोदकं दुर्गे वृष्टं पर्वतेषु विधावति ।
एवं धर्मान् पृथक् पश्यंस्तानेवानुविधावति ॥ २.१.१४॥

yathōdakaṁ durgē vr̥ṣṭaṁ parvatēṣu vidhāvati |
ēvaṁ dharmān pr̥thak paśyaṁstānēvānuvidhāvati || 2.1.14||

1	*Yathaa udakam durge vrishtam*	*Just as water rained on inaccessible height,*
2	*parvateshu vi-dhaavati;*	*gets dispersed as it runs to lower regions;*
3	*evam dharmaan prithak pashyan*	*so also one who perceives the selves differently*
4	*taan eva anu-vi-dhaavati.*	*cannot avoid running after them endlessly.*

2.1.15: ***Adherence to Non-Duality***

यथोदकं शुद्धे शुद्धमासिक्तं तादृगेव भवति ।
एवं मुनेर्विजानत आत्मा भवति गौतम ॥ २.१.१५॥

yathōdakaṁ śuddhē śuddhamāsiktaṁ tādr̥gēva bhavati |
ēvaṁ munērvijānata ātmā bhavati gautama || 2.1.15||

5	*Yathaa udakam shuddhe shuddham*	*Just as pure water when into pure water*
6	*aasiktam taadrik eva bhavati;*	*it is poured, it becomes verily pure water only;*
7	*evam muneh vijaanatah*	*so also the pure thoughts of men of knowledge*
8	*aatmaa bhavati Gautama.*	*'poured' on the Self, remain pure, O Gautama.*

These two verses also form a related pair, and bring the chapter to a fitting close by taking us in a poetic flight to the realm of the Self. Two beautiful similes are introduced, both concerning water but looked at from opposite sides.

The Theory of Oneness, the Grand Heights of Vedanta philosophy, is upheld in these verses. Departing from it, by even the least amount, one is faced with the inevitable plunge into Duality and Plurality, a fall which is accompanied by serious consequences. Staying in the Heights protects one from these consequences.

Simile 1: "Udakam Durge Vrishtam" – Water Poured on the Peak (4.14)

1-2 When rain falls on the top of a mountain peak, the water flows down and down over rocky faces into the steep valleys of the surrounding terrain. Eventually, the flow ends on the plains, a great distance away from the mountains.

3-4 So also, supreme peace rains down upon us when we are at our Source. No sooner does our mind get scattered into various lower desires, our life loses its vigour and vibrancy, and reduces to a sluggish flow on the 'plains' of monotonous, repeated sense-pleasures. This scenario awaits the spiritual seeker who does not get firmly established in the Non-dual Self. The comparison beautifully brings out the contrast in the life lived in two distinctly opposite "geographical" regions of the mind – the region of Oneness and the region of Differences. The slightest departure from the philosophical territory of Oneness poses the certain threat of chasing a scattered, illusory existence.

The hidden message to all aspirants is to strive ceaselessly until the Non-dual Reality is established. Until then, there is always danger of a fall that could prove calamitous.

Simile 2: "Shuddham Udakam" – Pure Water Poured into Pure Water (4.15)

5-6 Pure water mixed with pure water remains pure water – a rather obvious conclusion. But as a metaphor, there is a great message in it that spiritual aspirants can take: Keeping company with the pure provides the best chance of remaining pure. That is one message. The other is that we should intensify our quest to reach 100% purity and then stay in that purity all our lives.

Keeping the mind firmly fixed on the 'Higher Goal', one freezes at the top and becomes a 'Glacier'; scattering the mind with desires, one melts and flows as a 'River' into the hot plains of sorrow and pain.

7-8 Purity ushers in Non-Duality, the sole solution to all problems that beset man. Holding aloft the ideal of Non-duality, sages have dwelt in apparent aloofness. They have protected the fruit of their Sadhana by continuously remaining within the lofty vision they beheld upon reaching the spiritual Heights.

As mountain snow remains in pristine purity, whilst the snow on the streets gets slushy with mud, so also the sages have remained pure in their aloofness from all worldliness, and avoided becoming the slush trampled upon by every passerby.

Such is the lofty vision and goal set before us by the Rishis of the Upanishadic era. This is an eternal message, not an outdated one. Sincere seekers will treasure it even today and at all times. And they alone will reap the fullest harvest of peace of mind, purity and sanctity of life.

UNION OF JIVA AND BRAHMAN

Here is one more meaning we can draw out from this verse:

The mergence of the individual soul with the Supreme Self may be likened to the pouring of clear water into clear water. The result is complete identity of the two waters. Our essential nature is pure spirit; the taint present in us is due to departure from that purity. Recovery of that purity is the pre-condition before we can merge into the Supreme.

In the Bhashya, Shankaracharyaji makes some very strong comments about those who do not aim for such purity. He speaks of the incorrigible logicians who flout the scriptures, of those with Tamasic Buddhis, and of those with unbending pride. He also praises the Nachiketas-element wherever it is seen in the youth, in all ages.

Acharyaji paraphrased the Bhashya in beautiful, inspired words:

"Give up this Ego of yours. Treasure this knowledge with great respect and love. The Vedas are giving you this knowledge with love that is greater than that of 'a thousand fathers and mothers'! Reflect upon this seriously, and become humble."

Acharyaji has himself been both father and mother to us, his students, throughout the two-year Course. His words stand witness to this fact.

Note: *Acharyaji commented at this point on the unpredictable style of the Upanishads in comparison to the logical, predictable thought flow found in the Prakarana Granthas studied earlier. "The Upanishads have a 'Diwali' style," he said. "They are like fireworks bursting everywhere in all directions! They have their own beauty and charm – they are refreshing, like bathing in the cool streams of the Himalayas! They are an Ocean of Knowledge."*

॥ इति काठकोपनिषदि द्वितीयाध्याये प्रथमा वल्ली ॥

|| iti kāṭhakōpaniṣadi dvitīyādhyāyē prathamā vallī ||

*****

View of the Himalayan Mountains
from the Chinmaya Mission Ashram at Sidhabadi, Himachal Pradesh.
The Sandeepany students spent a few days of hiking,
relaxation, and silent prayer here.

Chapter 2.2: (15 verses)
THE SEARCH FOR BRAHMAN

WE HAVE ALREADY met with the *'Chariot'* simile in Chapter 1.3, and the *'Punished Senses'* and the *'Rain on the Peaks'* similes in Chapter 2.1. Now we are introduced to another beautiful simile of the Upanishad, namely, the *'Eleven-Gated City'* of the gross body.

This chapter represents the steps to be taken to arrive at the Truth which Nachiketas seeks. The chapter is divided into two distinct sub sections. The first covers the search for Brahman as He unfolds Himself in Creation, i.e. the *Immanent* Brahman, starting with the body. The second section then continues the search in the *Transcendent*, Absolute realm.

THE IMMANENT BRAHMAN

2.2.1: ***Brahman in the "Eleven-Gated City"***

पुरमेकादशद्वारमजस्यावक्रचेतसः ।
अनुष्ठाय न शोचति विमुक्तश्च विमुच्यते ।
एतद्वै तत् ॥ २.२.१॥

puramēkādaśadvāramajasyāvakracētasaḥ |
anuṣṭhāya na śōcati vimuktaśca vimucyatē |
ētadvai tat || 2.2.1||

1	*Puram ekaa-dasha dvaaram*	*A "**CITY**" with eleven gates is (this body),*
2	*ajasya avakra chetasah;*	*belonging to the Unborn, unflickering Consciousness.*
3	*anushthaaya na shochati*	*By **meditating** on Him, one does not grieve,*
4	*vimuktah cha vimuchyate.*	*He is liberated, and being free, he gains emancipation.*
5	***Etat vai tat.***	***This is verily That!***

This is another of the *extended metaphors* used so effectively in this Upanishad to point out the Truth. This time it is the **CITY**, with its eleven entrances. The body is being compared to a city. The essential point of this analogy is to correct the usual error of thinking that we are the body. "God has given me (my true Self) a City to live in. Why do I need to rest on a couch, to sit on a chair, to want a home as my dwelling?"

To begin to think that we are not the body but the Self, the Rishi gives us this Upasana by which we learn to view the ***Body*** as our real resting place. Only the false "I" needs beds and couches, soft sofas and mattresses, palatial mansions and bungalows.

In reality there is no resting needed for the Self, but we cannot start that high. We need to build ourselves up towards that Truth. This is only the beginning. By meditation on Brahman, we shall slowly expand and accept our God-given "City".

Application of the "City" Metaphor:

A city is a complete unit which is self-supporting and self-governed. Its functions are performed by people specially appointed to execute them. Among them are its gatekeepers who keep a check on all input and output from the city. There are others above the gatekeepers who rule the city, such as the King, the ministers and their officers.

1 ***Puram***: Each human individual, identified with a *body*, is a "*City*" unto himself, functioning as an independent living being. ***Ekaa-dasha Dvaaram***: The *"11 gates"* of the body are: the 7 openings on the head (2 eyes, 2 ears, 2 nostrils and 1 mouth); 3 openings in the lower body (the navel, the genital organ and anus) and 1 non-physical "opening" at the crown of the head called the *Brahma-Randhra*.

We have already seen in *Tattwa Bodha* all the 17 subtle body components and the 5 gross body elements which make up the body-city.

2 ***Ajasya***: "*of the Unborn (Self)*". The King who is in charge of the city stands as an independent person who is totally responsible for the proper governing of the entire city. He takes all the major decisions; all others carry out his orders.

The King or Swami of this body is the "Unborn" Atman, the Supreme Self. He is the head who provides the driving force behind all the other functions performed within the body. This Self is of a completely different nature from that of all the others who serve Him in carrying out the body's functions.

Avakra Chetasah: "*of unflickering consciousness*". One of his most outstanding characteristics is that He is Eternal, undying or "unflickering". The body dies but the Self is Immortal. This is a basic definition of the Self, the one who owns this city.

Another meaning for this phrase is "one who is not crooked, convoluted, or twisted; who is straightforward and cannot be bribed; of a steadfast nature". Such indeed is the Self. This is how He would run the city – if only had the full power to do so!

Upasana on the "Eleven-gated City"

When a metaphor is used for meditation, that meditation is called an Upasana.

3 ***Anushthaaya***: "*by meditating upon*". The purpose of bringing in the simile of the City is to provide an Upasana or a meditation technique to the student or seeker. The seeker takes up each aspect of the City and tries to meditate on how he would like to see it function if he were the Mayor of the city, the Self.

The Deities who preside over the senses, as well as over the Pranas and the inner mental equipment are like the *Councillors* of this city. If these councillors always bear in mind ("meditate on") this Supreme King who dwells in the body, no harm will befall the city.

4 It is usual in the Upanishads that, whenever an Upasana is given, it is always accompanied by the Phala or fruit that one gets due to its practice. People who perform Upasanas always keep this fruit in mind when they do the practice. The Upasanas of the Jnana Kanda (Upanishads) always have the Supreme Brahman as the goal to be attained.

By doing this Upasana, one is freed and emancipated from the endless rounds of births and deaths in Samsara. That is the meaning of 'emancipation' in this line.

5 This Self is the answer to that which Nachiketas asked about in his third boon. The words *Etat Vai Tat* meaning "This indeed is that," are repeated again and again in many verses in order to refer us back to Nachiketas's question to Yama in boon three.

2.2.2: ***Brahman – Everywhere, in Everything***

हँसः शुचिषद्वसुरान्तरिक्षसद्-
होता वेदिषदतिथिर्दुरोणसत् ।
नृषद्वरसदृतसद्व्योमसद्
अब्जा गोजा ऋतजा अद्रिजा ऋतं बृहत् ॥ २.२.२॥

haṁsaḥ śuciṣadvasurāntarikṣasad-
hōtā vēdiṣadatithirdurōṇasat |
nṛṣadvarasadṛtasadvyōmasad
abjā gōjā ṛtajā adrijā ṛtaṁ bṛhat || 2.2.2||

1	*Hamsah shuchishad, vasuh antariksha sad,*	*As the Sun He dwells in the heavens; as Air He dwells in the sky;*
2	*hotaa vedi-shat, atithih durona-sat;*	*as Fire He dwells in the sacrificial altar (or on earth); as a guest He dwells in a house;*
3	*nri-shat, vara-sat, rita-sat, vyoma-sat,*	*He dwells in man, He dwells in the Gods, He dwells in the sacrifices, and He dwells in the sky;*
4	*abjaa, gojaa, ritajaa, adrijaa, ritam, brihat.*	*He is born in the water, on the earth, from the sacrifice, and on the mountains; He is all that is true and great.*

The Upasana of feeling that one rests in one's body, is intended only to teach us that we are not the body, but only live in it. That being so, it would be a mistake if we think that the Self is limited to just our body. This verse immediately presents the broader picture of the Self to prevent this error creeping in. The Self is present *everywhere* and in *everyone*.

Link: The Bhashya introduces the fuller vision of the same Self. The meditator is reminded that the Self is the same in all beings. Not only that, but the Self has no limits – it has absolutely no boundaries. The whole Universe is its full dwelling place, not just '*my*' body. To this end, certain specific forms in which the Self dwells are given:

The Boundaries of the "City"

1-2 The City represented only one body; this is now being extended to all three manifested worlds. The three regions or worlds mentioned in these two Padas are the complete "resting place" of the Self. They form the first three of the seven higher worlds. The other four are not mentioned because they are not manifested.

i) ***Shuchishad:*** This stands for *Svah Loka* or "*the heavens*". The Sun is the main dweller of the heavenly region.

ii) ***Antariksha-sad*** – This stands for *Bhuvah Loka* or "*the interspatial region*" between heaven and Earth. It is usually translated as space in which dwells Air.

iii) ***Vedi-shat*** – This stands for *Bhu Loka* or "Earth". It is usually represented by the fire element, from which the water and earth elements arise.

iv) ***Durona-sat:*** Within Earth, this could be taken to mean the "*homes*", i.e. the "bodies", or, in the context of this Chapter, the *Cities* in which the Lord comes to dwell as an ***Atithi***, "*a guest*". By this, it is being said that the same Self rests in all bodies.

Durona could also be taken to mean the special "*kalasha* or *jar*" in which the Soma juice is kept during the Soma sacrifice. If Fire in the Vedi-shat above is taken to mean the sacrificial fires, then this translation blends with it. The Soma juice is crushed from the *soma* creeper and is considered to be a guest at a sacrifice, and kept in these special jars. Soma is to a sacrifice what Prana or Life is to the human body.

The Residents & Residences in the "City"

3 The Presence of the Lord the City is seen in different degrees among its residents:

v) ***Nrisat*** – among *men*, He dwells as an ordinary city resident.

vi) ***Varasat*** – among the *adorable ones*, He dwells as befitting the Deities or representatives of God's powers, in more palatial quarters.

vii) ***Ritasat*** – among the *worshippers* of God, He dwells in their *temples*.

viii) ***Vyomasat*** – among the liberated sages, He has more space for Himself; He dwells in *the sky*, that is, in their uncluttered minds! The clearness and limitlessness of the sky represents an awakened sage.

4 Besides these categories, He also has many other places to dwell:

ix) ***Abjah*** – in beings born of water, that is, all aquatic creatures like the fishes.

x) ***Gojah*** – in beings born of earth, i.e. the numerous animals, insects and reptiles.

xi) ***Ritajah*** – in beings born of sacrifices, i.e. as a result of performing sacrifices.

xii) ***Adrijah*** – He even dwells in the rivers and lakes born of mountains.

In short, the Lord is free to dwell in everything – after all, it is His City. He is the ***Ritam*** or the "*unchanging existence principle*" in everything that exists. He is also ***Brihat*** or that which is "*great, noble and lustrous*" in everything, i.e. that which makes a thing great. The word could also be taken to mean the Lord Himself, who is the great Lord of the City.

The central meaning of this verse is that the *entire world* has only one Self as its basis, which pervades everything in creation. There is no plurality called "Selves".

In an extended meaning given in the Bhashya, it is clarified that even if all the above words are taken as adjectives for the Sun (***Aditya***), as they can grammatically, they still refer to the Self because the Sun is taken as a simile for the Self in many *Upanishads*.

2.2.3: ***Brahman – Director of Pranas & Deities***

ऊर्ध्वं प्राणमुन्नयत्यपानं प्रत्यगस्यति ।
मध्ये वामनमासीनं विश्वे देवा उपासते ॥ २.२.३॥

ūrdhvaṁ prāṇamunnayatyapānaṁ pratyagasyati |
madhyē vāmanamāsīnaṁ viśvē dēvā upāsatē || 2.2.3||

1	*Oordhvam praanam unnayati*	*He (Brahman) sends Prana upwards;*
2	*apaanam pratyak asyati;*	*He throws the Apana downwards;*
3	*madhye vaamanam aaseenam*	*that Adorable One seated in the centre*
4	*vishwe devaah upaasate.*	*is He that is worshipped by all the Gods.*

From the Presence of Brahman in the vast Cosmos, we shift to the role or function of Brahman. What does He do there? How do we recognise His Presence everywhere and in everyone. Again, the Rishi starts by considering the Lord in the body.

1-2 The most obvious function of the Supreme Lord in the body is seen in the power and energy provided by the Life Principle or Prana. Every body function happens because of Prana. There are 5 aspects to this Prana; the two most important ones, representing the incoming and the outgoing breath, are mentioned, but the other three are implied.

All these different functions performed within the body are controlled by Brahman, the Supreme Lord, with Prana being His agent or Deity. And Prana is only one example.

3 A graphic picture is presented by the Rishi of how the Lord executes His function. Just as the boss in a factory, the Lord has His own office; He sits in the well-known 'heart centre' frequently referred to in Vedic literature. The office is the intellect, which is like the "Control Room" for the whole body. The Self sits there in the centre and directs the Pranas to perform their functions: "O Prana, you go upwards; and you, O Apana, your job is to go downwards!" The idea being conveyed is that the Lord gets things done just through His very Presence. He does not have to raise a finger; He has his Deity-officers to do that.

An Illustrative Story

Acharyaji was here reminded of a story:

A man went to a Government office to see the Chief Minister. He was told that the Minister was not in. However, he said he would wait. Time went by. Again he went to the secretary. She said, "I told you he is out. You should come on another day." The man was unmoved, he continued waiting. By evening, the secretary looked very concerned. She went inside the Minister's office. In a short while the Minister himself came out to meet the man. He asked, "How did you know that I was in?" The visitor said, "I could see everyone busy at their work. So I knew you were in!"

Acharyaji gave other common examples to illustrate the point further. When we see a TV on, we know that someone must have switched it on, even if it was with a remote. When the house furniture is neat and clean; when all equipment is functioning well; when the garden is trimmed – then we know that someone is living in the house. The garden cannot be the owner of a home, nor can the equipment, nor the furniture. They indicate the presence of an owner.

4 All matters are referred to this Boss by the subsidiary powers or Deities of all the functions of the body. That is what "worshipped by all the Gods" means. They all have to take their orders from the central office. The Deities could also mean the sense organs, for they bring the information of the sense objects to the Self. They "worship" their Lord by bringing to Him their presents of sensory information.

The tongue eats for the Self, stomach digests for the Self. Everything is going on so smoothly. All these Deities are really being driven by someone superior. The organs in themselves are 'inert'. Their function as a team seem indicates that there is a "hidden hand" behind everything. Who could That be? How is it possible for everything to function so well?

Acharyaji's words were very pragmatic on this point, and made flawless logic:

"When useless (inert) fellows come together and work in harmony, know that there is a useful (sentient) fellow behind them!"

THE SELFLESSNESS OF PRANA

Acharyaji paid special tribute to the great qualities seen in Prana.

The Pranas serve selflessly under the inspiration of their leader, the Self. They serve ceaselessly and willingly, not grudgingly. They do not serve out of fear, watching the clock. They are busy throughout the night, taking no rest themselves. If the servants are so noble, how much greater would their Leader be!

Technically interpreted, the Pranas are indicated as serving two major roles. The choice of the verbs *Unnayati* (**1**) and *Pratyak Asyati* (**2**) is superb, bringing out these two roles in a novel, expressive way. The former describes the Prana which performs the role of 'leading higher up' or 'raising'; the latter describes Apana which 'thrusts inwards or downwards'. The Self, the *Adorable One* (**3**), is described as seated at the centre between these two. This is purely figurative; no spatial separation is intended here. The Self is simply being described as the Controller of the Pranas. It is the central processing unit of the body mechanism.

The Bhashya brings out the implication of this verse very beautifully. The word *Upaasate* (**4**) means "*they worship*". It is as if the Pranas are bringing gifts to their Master, just as the subjects bring presents to their King. It is a wonderful way of showing the love and harmony that exists between the Self and Its devoted servants. The Self is a benign ruler, not a dictator. He certainly is at a higher level than all the other Deities in the body.

2.2.4: ***When the Body is Negated, What Remains?***

अस्य विस्रंसमानस्य शरीरस्थस्य देहिनः ।
देहाद्विमुच्यमानस्य किमत्र परिशिष्यते ।
एतद्वै तत् ॥ २.२.४॥

asya visraṁsamānasya śarīrasthasya dēhinaḥ |
dēhādvimucyamānasya kimatra pariśiṣyatē |
ētadvai tat || 2.2.4||

1	*Asya vistram samaanasya*	*As this gets loosened or detached,*
2	*shareera-sthasya dehinah;*	*the embodied Self, the indweller of the body,*
3	*dehaat vimuchya maanasya*	*gets freed from the body.*
4	*kim atra parishishyate.*	*What then remains here?*
5	***Etat vai tat.***	***This is verily That!***

1-3 The seeker is being taken step by step from body-consciousness to actually feeling that he is the spirit within the body. The whole meditation is designed to shift our attention from the gross body to the subtlest part of our being – the Self within. But that can only be done is stages.

4 When death comes, the Prana 'departs' from the body. *What remains?* The question is very deep. The direct answer is not given here; we have two possible answers and they lie at two extremes. Which is correct?

Two Interpretations Possible

There are two ways of looking at this verse: The first is from the perspective of the seeker engaged in Sadhana to liberate himself. The second is from the perspective of an ordinary soul who does not question life until he comes face to face with death.

A. As Negation During Meditation: The first is to see the "loosening and detaching" as the process of negation applied by the Yogis during their meditation. What remains after negation of all the gross and subtle bodies is the pure Presence of *the Self*. This suits the overall thought-flow of the text, which has in this chapter begun taking us deeper into our Being and wants us to recognise ourselves as the Eternal Self, while *living*.

B. As the Approach of Death: The second is to see it as referring to the approach of death, when the Prana and subtle body constituents get "loosened and detached" from the gross body. Then what remains? – Just a rotting lump of *flesh and bones*, about to be pulverised into ash! This is the more literal approach and, strangely, one that both Sri Shankaracharyaji and Pujya Gurudev tend to give their approval to.

We shall soon discover that these two are not contradictory, but represent the two extreme ends of the same **Path of Evolution** of man.

The *similarity* in the two interpretations is that, in both cases, the body, mind and intellect complex is seen to be of secondary value. They constitute the Upadhis or limitations within which the Self resides. The King of the city is the Self or Atman. He is the enlivening Presence that matters most in the life of the body-city. When He departs, all the people (i.e. the subtle body constituents) also depart with Him as His followers.

The *difference* in the two interpretations lies in "What remains?" In the former, it is the *Self* that remains. In the latter case, it is the lifeless body, the *Not-Self*, that remains.

So it all depends on which side of the fence we are sitting, the Self or the non-Self. The truth is we *evolve* from the not-Self to the Self.

The next verse probes into this a little deeper . . .

2.2.5: ***When Prana is Negated, What Remains?***

न प्राणेन नापानेन मर्त्यो जीवति कश्चन ।
इतरेण तु जीवन्ति यस्मिन्नेतावुपाश्रितौ ॥ २.२.५॥

na prāṇēna nāpānēna martyō jīvati kaścana |
itarēṇa tu jīvanti yasminnētāvupāśritau || 2.2.5||

1	*Na praanena na apaanena*	*Not by Prana, nor by Apana*
2	*martyah jeevati kashchana;*	*does any mortal live;*
3	*itarena tu jeevanti*	*but it is by some **other factor** that they live*
4	*yasmin etau upaashritau.*	*on which these two depend.*

In this verse, the question "What remains?" is given a second look, but still we are not given the answer. The two possible answers so far are the Self and Not-Self. The Rishi retains the question mark. One further clue to the answer is given.

Link: The Bhashya has something to say on this point. Arising from interpretation B above, critics may say that it is due to the Pranas leaving the body that everything comes to a standstill. Hence, the Pranas must be God; implying that there is no such thing as the Self. This verse points to "another factor" beyond Prana. We are led to ask ourselves, "Why have we taken this human birth?" The answer to "What remains?" lies in answering this first.

1-2 The body's death coincides with the departure of Prana. This would seem to suggest that Prana is responsible for our life on earth. And if that is so, then once the Prana leaves, that is the end of our sojourn on earth. Our life comes to an abrupt end, as it were. Has life got no other meaning than this?

We know that the Pranas or life-energies (collectively called simply 'Prana') are most essential to maintain life in the body. However, that does not mean that it is the Prana that is the *cause* of life. Mortals do not live because Prana has entered their bodies. Prana, too, is quite inert in this sense. It is a product of the subtle elements.

3 The real cause is something else, it is not the Prana. *What really remains after death?* Like a good novelist, the Rishi keeps us in suspence for a second time – that is exactly what all good teachers do! TV serials thrive on that principle. Our Katha Upanishad is turning out to be among the great, best-selling mystery novels!

4 *Clue One*: The Rishi is generous enough to throw in a clue at this point. That factor upon which our human birth is what has sent the Prana to function in our body. The Prana depends on this factor, not the other way around.

To the question In the previous verse "What remains?", it is only because of what we see left behind after death that we answered, "A mass of flesh and bones. Nothing else is seen to remain." So it would seem. We now learn that the Pranas depend on something else for their presence in the body. That factor could well be the answer to "What remains?"

Is it not strange that the answers we are looking for in life become more pressing when we are faced with death. The uncertainty behind death brings to the surface the question of the purpose of life. What is the reason why we take birth in the first place? That is the deeper question behind, "*What remains when we die*?"

2.2.6: ***When the Body Departs, What Remains?***

हन्त त इदं प्रवक्ष्यामि गुह्यं ब्रह्म सनातनम् ।
यथा च मरणं प्राप्य आत्मा भवति गौतम ॥ २.२.६॥

hanta ta idaṁ pravakṣyāmi guhyaṁ brahma sanātanam |
yathā ca maraṇaṁ prāpya ātmā bhavati gautama || 2.2.6||

1	*Hanta te idam pravakshyaami*	*Well, now, I will explain to thee this*
2	*guhyam brahma sanaatanam;*	*mysterious and ancient truth about Brahman.*
3	*yathaa cha maranam praapya*	*You wished to know, when death takes place, what*
4	*aatmaa bhavati Gautama.*	*becomes of the Soul? O Gautama, (this I now answer):*

One may be wondering why there is so much reference to death in so many of these verses. What else can we expect from the Lord of Death! Besides, the verse has the scent of an answer for Boon 3 all over it! We ought never to forget that all this mystery is unfolding due to Nachiketas's desire to experience the state of Godhood, to know the secret behind life and death. That is his question.

1-2 Lord Yama has built up our appetite for the answer. We are hot on the trail of Boon Three, asked four chapters ago: "***Does He exist, or does He not?***" If He does not exist, then the question of what happens after death does not arise. We are left with the sterile answer – we become a pile of ashes! If He does exist, then do we go to Him when we die? If not, why not? What would prevent us from reaching Him when we die?

Guhyam Brahma: "*Mystery or secret of Brahman*". To digress from the main theme, there is a misunderstanding among people that 'secret' here means that the knowledge should not be divulged. Acharyaji said that it meant 'subtle', not 'secret'. The subtlety itself would ensure that it cannot go into the wrong hands and be misused. An impure intellect with impure intentions will not be able to grasp the knowledge in the first place. Hence, there is no fear of divulging it to the wrong person. It may be freely propagated.

Pujya Gurudev used to say, "The Knowledge itself will protect itself. Those who come for the wrong reason will *fall asleep* when the knowledge is spoken – because they will not even understand it!" He thus maintained a fiery spirit to spread this knowledge throughout the world without imposing any pre-conditions. He watered the whole garden, knowing that the seeds that were not ready to sprout will remain seeds, till the next rains come – or the rains after that!

After that digression, we return to the immediate theme on hand.

3-4 Lord Yama is about to answer the question posed to him by Nachiketas as the Third Boon. But that answer still remains in suspense. Surely there has to be some very good reason for this build up of suspense. Like a skilled bridge player, Lord Yama is holding on to his trump card and keeping us in suspense.

However, in the next verse Lord Yama is finally ready with his answer. Are we ready to receive it?

2.2.7: ***Answer 1: While in Ignorance***

योनिमन्ये प्रपद्यन्ते शरीरत्वाय देहिनः ।
स्थाणुमन्येऽनुसंयन्ति यथाकर्म यथाश्रुतम् ॥ २.२.७॥

yōnimanyē prapadyantē śarīratvāya dēhinaḥ |
sthāṇumanyē:'nusaṁyanti yathākarma yathāśrutam || 2.2.7||

1	*Yonim anye prapadyante*	*Entering a (human) womb, some*
2	*shareeratvaaya dehinah;*	*embodied souls are destined to have a body;*
3	*sthaanum anye anu-samyanti*	*other souls continue only as plants.*
4	*yathaa karma yathaa shrutam.*	*It all happens as per one's **Karma** and **Knowledge**.*

This gives *Answer 1* to Yama's question "What remains?" For the man who is still in Ignorance, his balance of **Karma** and his accumulated **Knowledge** is what remains.

The two options so far - i) unite with the Self; or ii) become a pile of ashes and terminate existence once and for all – are two extreme cases of the spectrum. There is an intelligent third option between these two being unveiled in this verse. This option is exactly the knowledge that Nachiketas asked for in boon three.

ANSWER 1:

4 Our life rests on our **Karma** (deeds) and our **Knowledge** or experience gained. These are the two factors we take with us when we die. They determine the type of birth we get. We get what we deserve as per our actions (Karma) and our intellectual growth (Knowledge). The whole theory of Rebirth is based on this (see box on next page).

1-3 The range of bodies is very vast – it varies from the human birth which is the highest type, to that of plants or trees or perhaps insects and worms, which are of the lowest type. This places a huge premium on the human birth; it is something very rare and precious. What body we get in depends entirely on how choose to *act* and *think*.

2.2.8: ***Answer 2: When Knowledge Dawns***

य एष सुप्तेषु जागर्ति
कामं कामं पुरुषो निर्मिमाणः ।
तदेव शुक्रं तद्ब्रह्म तदेवामृतमुच्यते ।
तस्मिँल्लोकाः श्रिताः सर्वे तदु नात्येति कश्चन ।
एतद्वै तत् ॥ २.२.८॥

ya ēṣa suptēṣu jāgarti
kāmaṁ kāmaṁ puruṣō nirmimāṇaḥ |
tadēva śukraṁ tadbrahma tadēvāmr̥tamucyatē |
tasmiṁllōkāḥ śritāḥ sarvē tadu nātyēti kaścana |
ētadvai tat || 2.2.8||

1	*Yah eshah supteshu jaagarti*	*The Purusha remains awake, while we are in sleep,*
2	*kaamam kaamam purushah nirmimaanah;*	*He shapes the countless objects of our desire.*
3	*tat eva shukram tat brahma*	*He alone is Pure, He is Brahman;*
4	*tat eva amritam uchyate;*	*He alone is known as the Immortal;*
5	*tasmin lokaah shritaah sarve*	*in Him rest all the worlds;*
6	*tat u atyeti na kashchana.*	*verily, there is none who can transcend Him.*
7	***Etat vai tat.***	***This is verily That!***

The first two Padas continue *Answer 1*. From Pada 3-7 we have *Answer 2*.

1-2 **Answer 1 (Contd.)**: When Karmic debts are yet to be paid and Knowledge of the Self is yet to be acquired, Answer 1 still applies. In this case, when we die, "we are in sleep". While we are 'sleeping', the Purusha is awake and busy shaping the circumstances for our next birth on earth. What desires remained unfulfilled when we die get carried forward to shape our next birth. That keeps the Purusha (Ishwara) busy or 'awake'.

Kaamam Kaamam: "*endless attempts to get happiness*". The Lord gives us a long rope to have our experiences in search of happiness. We may search in all different directions, covering the full range of sensory pleasures, but He knows that ultimately that search will bring us to Him, the only true and reliable Source of permanent happiness.

THE THEORY OF REBIRTH

WITHOUT ADVANCING IN knowledge, we face a stagnant future, not even being sure that we will have a human birth. With a little application of the intellect, we can deduce the following possibilities just from what we learn in this verse:

We see that if we do not *advance* in our knowledge, we are unlikely to get a human birth. An animal birth is more likely. However, if we have accumulated sufficient knowledge and have done a sufficient number of good actions, we earn the right to be born as humans.

Let us assume this to be the case. Then the question of "What remains?" arises. The scenario opens up to the **Theory of Rebirth** which is unique in the Hindu religion. Lord Yama has thrown the hint of what remains when we die – it is our Karma and our knowledge. These two remain intact when the body falls. That subtle bundle is the wealth we take forward after death. This wealth determines what birth we take in our next life. We have to be deserving enough to be born as humans.

Rebirth can be an endless process if we do not continually extend our knowledge and continually improve our actions. If we do, then we get a better birth in which we receive more opportunities to develop our mind and perform meaningful deeds. Soon we develop sufficiently to begin treading the spiritual path; and, if all goes well, we can reach the *point of perfection* and become merged in our Self.

With the secret Knowledge of Yama, we become "deserving". A major U-turn occurs in life. We begin to take our spiritual growth more seriously. A greater effort is made in our Sadhana to reach the goal promised by that knowledge. The more keen and thirsty we are for this knowledge, the more effort we shall put into our Sadhana to attain it. This is the hope Yama has, and this is why he has made us wait so long for the crucial answer.

The Goal is to merge into Brahman. This can happen only while we are alive. We do not need to wait for death before the merging takes place. In fact, Because spiritual growth is a 'conscious' one, it can only take place while we are alive, and in the waking state!

Our birth depends on what we *desire*, and what we *deserve*. In accordance with our standing regarding these two, we get a particular birth. Two laws govern them respectively. One is the Law of Intention (***Shrutam***), the other the Law of Action (***Karma***).

ANSWER 2:

3-7 Should we succeed in clearing our **Karma** debts completely so that the balance is nil, and should we become firmly established in the **Knowledge** of the Self, then we merge completely into the immanent Reality. This is *Answer 2* to "What remains?". It is nothing short of Self-realisation itself. It is the ultimate Goal of life.

3-5 The nature of the Reality to be attained is described. The basic nature is:

Shukram, Amritam, Shritaah: "*Purity, Immortality and Dependability*". These are basic attributes by which Brahman is known by the intellect. He is the Immortal One behind all the changing names and forms that engage our attention outwardly.

6 Once we attain the goal through developing this nature, there is nothing beyond it to be attained. That is the *summum bonum* of life. The spiritual quest ends here.

7 This is the Mahavakya of this Upanishad. "**This**" is verily "**That**", namely, Brahman.

A VISION OF THE DIVINE

A vision of the Immanence of God is presented before us. The secret to attaining it lies in developing the subtlety of vision to discern the Real from the superficial. That ability comes by making the intellect extremely subtle and pure. To succeed in achieving such an intellect, we need to live in such a way that all our Karmas get annulled, and our intellect is firmly rooted in Self-abidance. This requires a combination of Karma Yoga, Bhakti Yoga and Jnana Yoga. All three are needed in an integrated approach to attain the goal.

This simple secret is what is spoken of in all the scriptures again and again. This is the Brahman about which Nachiketas asked for in his third boon. This is the Brahman for whose sake Nachiketas spurned the whole wide world of pleasure and power!

Acharyaji once again typically went to the root of the reason why such a secret remains unknowable to us: "We are acting in this world drama so well that we have forgotten that we are only acting!"

Another Sufi poet has written, "You yourself are your own veil. You cover yourselves. The soul is the bride with a veil over her; only the Husband, the Supreme Self, can lift the veil and behold her."

*****

THE TRANSCENDENT BRAHMAN

From 2.2.9 up to 2.2.15, our search for Brahman takes us into transcendental realms. From the restrictions of the "City of Eleven Gates", we have expanded to include the whole universe and see Brahman in every aspect of it. Now we go into the abstract realm and attempt to discover the transcendental Supreme Divine, untouched by any contamination.

Link passage: In his introduction to this Upasana, Sri Shankaracharyaji supports in strong terms the use of repetition in these verses. Truths need to be hammered home sometimes. Shankaracharyaji says, "The proofs that are not reiterated do not find a lodging in the hearts of those scholars of mediocre intellects, whose minds can be swayed by the perverted intellect (***Kubuddhi***) of numerous logicians (***Tarkika***)."

2.2.9/10/11: ***The Immanence & Transcendence of the Self***

अग्निर्यथैको भुवनं प्रविष्टो
रूपं रूपं प्रतिरूपो बभूव ।
एकस्तथा सर्वभूतान्तरात्मा
रूपं रूपं प्रतिरूपो बहिश्च ॥ २.२.९॥

वायुर्यथैको भुवनं प्रविष्टो
रूपं रूपं प्रतिरूपो बभूव ।
एकस्तथा सर्वभूतान्तरात्मा
रूपं रूपं प्रतिरूपो बहिश्च ॥ २.२.१०॥

सूर्यो यथा सर्वलोकस्य चक्षुः
न लिप्यते चाक्षुषैर्बाह्यदोषैः ।
एकस्तथा सर्वभूतान्तरात्मा
न लिप्यते लोकदुःखेन बाह्यः ॥ २.२.११॥

agniryathaikō bhuvanaṁ praviṣṭō
rūpaṁ rūpaṁ pratirūpō babhūva |
ēkastathā sarvabhūtāntarātmā
rūpaṁ rūpaṁ pratirūpō bahiśca || 2.2.9||

vāyuryathaikō bhuvanaṁ praviṣṭō
rūpaṁ rūpaṁ pratirūpō babhūva |
ēkastathā sarvabhūtāntarātmā
rūpaṁ rūpaṁ pratirūpō bahiśca || 2.2.10||

sūryō yathā sarvalōkasya cakṣuḥ
na lipyatē cākṣuṣairbāhyadōṣaiḥ |
ēkastathā sarvabhūtāntarātmā
na lipyatē lōkaduḥkhēna bāhyaḥ || 2.2.11||

1	*Agnih yathaa ekah bhuvanam pravishtah*	*Just as **FIRE**, though one, entering the world*
2	*roopam roopam prati-roopah babhoova;*	*assumes various forms and shapes; so also*
3	*ekah tathaa sarva-bhoota antah-aatmaa*	*the **immanent** Self of all beings, though one,*
4	*roopam roopam prati-roopah bahih cha.*	*assumes the form according to each shape it enters, and yet It remains beyond them (is **transcendent**).*

5	*Vaayuh yathaa ekah bhuvanam pravishtah*	*Just as **AIR**, though one, entering the world,*
6	*roopam roopam prati-roopah babhoova;*	*assumes various forms and shapes; so also*
7	*ekah tathaa sarva-bhoota antah-aatmaa*	*the **immanent** Self of all beings, though one,*
8	*roopam roopam prati-roopah bahih cha.*	*assumes the form according to each shape it enters, and yet It remains beyond them (is **transcendent**);*

9	*Sooryah yathaa sarva lokasya chakshuh*	*Just as the **SUN**, the eye of the whole world,*
10	*na lipyate chaakshushaih baahya-doshaih;*	*is not tainted by ocular and external defects,*
11	*ekah tathaa sarva-bhoota antah-aatmaa*	*the **immanent** Self of all beings, though one,*
12	*na lipyate loka duhkhena baahyah.*	*is not tainted by the sorrows of the world, as It is external to them, (it is **transcendent**).*

These verses have a simplicity of construction in which the Upanishads excel. Then there is poetic symmetry and beauty in them which bring out their direct comparison to the Self. Thirdly, there is appropriateness of the choice of these everyday similes, as they are known to all, both in Vedic as well as modern times.

An Upasana is taught through these three verses. The Upasana begins with the introduction of three similes – on Fire, Air and Sun. Acharyaji added a modern simile to this, viz. Electricity, and even composed the necessary verse along the same lines as these, showing his great attention to detail!

Agni (fire), ***Vayu*** (air) and ***Sooryah*** (Sun), are three basic elements in nature; they are also regarded as the foremost among the Deities that govern Creation. In these three verses they are similes that illustrate the Immanence and the Transcendence of the Supreme Self. Immanence is the Self within a persons, and transcendence is the omnipresent Self.

Drishtantika & Daashtaantika

Two simple technical terms were introduced to us by Acharyaji. *Drishtantika* refers to the simile used, i.e. *fire*, *air* and *sun* in this case. *Daashtaantika* refers to the application of the simile, in this case, the *Self*.

1-2 ***Agnih***: "*Fire*". Fire in its pure state cannot be seen, it is formless. What we see as fire is due to its association with some fuel, such as wood, coal, camphor, ghee, incense, etc. The different shape we see fire in is due to the different shapes taken by the fuel.

5-6 ***Vayuh***: "*Air*". Air as life-breath is one in all life forms. However, for different beings, it manifests differently as in an elephant or in an ant; in a bright intellect or in a dull one; in a clear, uncluttered mind or in a restless, clouded mind.

9-10 ***Sooryah***: "*The Sun*". The third simile is the sun, the "Eye of the World". The source of light is one, but that source, by providing the light, enables all objects to be seen by all eyes. If there are defects in any of the eyes or the objects, they do not affect the sun.

So much for the *Drishtantika* or the example.

3-4, **7-8**, & **11-12** Now for the *Daashtaantika*, or the Self to which they are applied. The Self, too, is only one, homogenous Reality throughout the universe. However, it is reflected differently in every creature. As a result it appears in many ways in different people. Those differences do not affect the Self, which ever remains changeless, constant and free of all defects that may be present in people.

In the ***Bhashya***, Shankaracharya chooses examples which are considered to be the *most tainting* – such as urine and faecal matter! He just wants to bring out the point most effectively. Acharyaji remarked that it is a marvel to see how Shankaracharya 'milks' the verse to extract every bit of meaning from it!

THE STORY OF THENALIN

Here is a delightful story which Acharyaji narrated:

Every community has its typical comical characters. Like the Birbal of Persia, or the Sardarji of Punjab, or the van der Merwe of South Africa, there is the Thenalin Ramana of South India, who typifies the simpleton. He is the one that sits on the wrong side of the branch when cutting it off the tree! This story is one such in the life of Thenalin.

He was praying for the Divine Mother's vision at the local temple for a long period, but was never blessed with it. One day, when he was charged fully with devotional fervour, the Mother appeared before him in her Divine form with "Sahasraseersha" or thousand heads. He began to laugh in Her presence. The Mother was naturally curious to know why.

In childlike innocence, Thenalin said, "Mother, I have one head and two hands. Even then I have so much difficulty when I sneeze. How do You manage to handle a sneeze through thousand noses with just two hands!"

The Divine Mother had a hearty laugh with Thenalin, and blessed him by saying, "You will have the special blessing of always being able to make people laugh!"

The relevance of this anecdote? Thenalin's sneeze is the Immanent one; the Mother's thousand sneezes are transcendent ones!

2.2.12 & 13: ***Being One, Controlling All***

एको वशी सर्वभूतान्तरात्मा
एकं रूपं बहुधा यः करोति ।
तमात्मस्थं येऽनुपश्यन्ति धीराः
तेषां सुखं शाश्वतं नेतरेषाम् ॥ २.२.१२॥

नित्योऽनित्यानां चेतनश्चेतनानाम्
एको बहूनां यो विदधाति कामान् ।
तमात्मस्थं येऽनुपश्यन्ति धीराः
तेषां शान्तिः शाश्वती नेतरेषाम् ॥ २.२.१३॥

ēkō vaśī sarvabhūtāntarātmā
ēkaṁ rūpaṁ bahudhā yaḥ karōti |
tamātmasthaṁ yē:'nupaśyanti dhīrāḥ
tēṣāṁ sukhaṁ śāśvataṁ nētarēṣām || 2.2.12||

nityō:'nityānāṁ cētanaścētanānām
ēkō bahūnāṁ yō vidadhāti kāmān |
tamātmasthaṁ yē:'nupaśyanti dhīrāḥ
tēṣāṁ śāntiḥ śāśvatī nētarēṣām || 2.2.13||

1	*Ekah vashee sarva-bhoota antah aatmaa*	*One supreme Ruler is the inner Self of all;*
2	*ekam roopam bahudhaa yah karoti;*	*This one quality appears in all individuals.*
3	*tam aatmastham ye anu-pashyanti dheeraah*	*The wise realize Him in their own hearts.*
4	*teshaam sukham shaashvatam na itareshaam.*	*To them belong eternal JOY, to none else.*

5	*Nityah anityaanaam chetanah chetanaanaam*	*He is the Eternal among the non-eternals, the Intelligence among the intelligent ones;*
6	*ekah bahoonaam yah vidadhaati kaamaan;*	*Though One, He fulfils many desires.*
7	*tam aatmastham ye anu-pashyanti dheeraah*	*The wise realize Him in their own hearts.*
8	*teshaam shaanti shaashvatee na itareshaam.*	*To them is eternal PEACE, to none else.*

These two verses convey the same message. The Universal Self is within one's own heart – i.e. He that is transcendent is also immanent in our heart. This is another Upasana.

Rulership: Transcendent and Immanent

1-4 Rulership is transcendent as well as immanent. We are ruled by a Power that is universal, as well by a self-governing internal power. Both operate simultaneously. There is a democratic power that governs the destiny of the whole society, and there is also an individual power by which we control our own destiny. Here too, both apply simultaneously.

Political power falls into the hands of a leader in whom the seed of the common destiny of his country is sown. Notwithstanding the common destiny, each individual is self-empowered to act according to his own nature and determine the course of his future.

Only the ***Dheerah*** or wise ones, whose intellects have been purified by *knowledge* of the Self and *Karma* (see v 2.2.7) can behold the Self.

Other Qualities: Transcendent & Immanent

5-8 An example is used in the Bhashya to illustrate how the Supreme Lord can be both transcendent and immanent at the same time. The example used is of Fire.

Fire has the power to burn. This power of the Fire element is within all the other four gross elements also in a smaller degree than in fire. Hence it is not noticed in them as clearly as it is in the fire element itself. Similarly, the nature of Brahman is maximum in the Pure transcendent Brahman present everywhere, but is also seen to manifest in a limited way within each living being in different degrees according to the purity of that being.

The same applies to Brahman's nature of being Eternal. Everything in creation expresses that eternality in some way or other. It is the same with Intelligence, desire, and peacefulness or Shanti, all of which are mentioned in this verse.

2.2.14 & 15: ***"The Self is Self-Luminous, & Shines Variously!"***

तदेतदिति मन्यन्तेऽनिर्देश्यं परमं सुखम् ।
कथं नु तद्विजानीयां किमु भाति विभाति वा ॥ २.२.१४॥

न तत्र सूर्यो भाति न चन्द्रतारकं
नेमा विद्युतो भान्ति कुतोऽयमग्निः ।
तमेव भान्तमनुभाति सर्वं
तस्य भासा सर्वमिदं विभाति ॥ २.२.१५॥

tadētaditi manyantē:'nirdēśyaṁ paramaṁ sukham |
kathaṁ nu tadvijānīyāṁ kimu bhāti vibhāti vā || 2.2.14||

na tatra sūryō bhāti na candratārakaṁ
nēmā vidyutō bhānti kutō:'yamagniḥ |
tamēva bhāntamanubhāti sarvaṁ
tasya bhāsā sarvamidaṁ vibhāti || 2.2.15||

		Nachiketas the disciple asks:
1	*"Tat etat", iti manyante*	***'This is That'** – thus do the sages perceive*
2	*anir-deshyam paramam sukham;*	*that indescribable highest Bliss.*
3	*katham nu tat vijaaneeyaam*	*How shall I know That?*
4	*kim u bhaati vibhaati vaa.*	*Does It shine of Itself, or does it shine by another light?*

5	*Na tatra sooryah bhaati na chandra taarakam*	Yama answers: *The sun does not shine there, nor the moon, nor the stars,*
6	*na imaa vidyutah bhaanti kutah ayam agnih;*	*nor the lightning, much less this lamp.*
7	*tam eva bhaantam anubhaati sarvam*	*When He shines, everything shines after Him;*
8	*tasya bhaasaa sarvam idam vibhaati.*	*by His light, all these shine!*

The Disciple's Question: (2.2.14)

1 Sometimes in the scriptures "This" refers to the world, the Unreality, and "That" refers to Brahman, the Reality. However, in the context here, "This" and "That" refer to the Immanent Brahman and the Transcendent Brahman respectively. The Immanent is the Reality within the Unreality. The heart of the Katha Upanishad's message, its Mahavakya, is to show that "***This is That***".

2 Nachiketas is inspired by what has been said by Yama about those who have had the vision of the Self and enjoyed the "indescribable highest Bliss". One like Nachiketas would be very keen to have the vision straightaway.

3 His first reaction is to ask 'How?'. There is a sense of urgency in his question. It is not an just idle curiosity, but like dialling "911" to call the emergency rescue service.

The "How?" also arises in him for the following reason: If Brahman is transcendent as well as immanent, then where is it easier to find Him? – If it is in His immanent aspect, how is He to be *recognised* 'here'? If in His transcendent aspect, how is He to be *known* 'there'?

Differentiating Bhaati & Vibhaati

4 Linked to Nachiketas's "How?" is a practical dillema very common amongst spiritual seekers. "If the Self is self-revealing (***Bhaati***), then upon what condition does He reveal Himself to me? Alternatively, if there is some other intermediary agent through whom or through which He is revealed (***Vibhaati***), I would like to know of that. Perhaps there may be some other object, some scripture, some Deity, some wise person, some other secret knowledge, some technique of meditation, etc. If there is tell me about it, O Yama!"

These thoughts arise spontaneously in Nachiketas and hold him in suspense and anxiety. Indeed, they reveal how *keenly* he desires to know the Truth!

THE UPASARGA (PREFIX) "Vi"

At this point, it is useful to know something about the Upasarga or prefix '*Vi*'. In Samskrit there are 22 Upasargas which, when added before a root, creates a new word with a specific meaning, e.g. ***Vi-Bhaati***. *Vi* here can have three different meanings:

i) *Vi* = '*Visesha*', something "*specific*" by which the Self is made known.

ii) *Vi* = '*Vividha*' - "*variously, in many ways*"; a variety of effects, with one cause.

iii) *Vi* = '*Vispashtam*', a "*special Avatara*" who manifests to reveal the Self to man.

An Exploration of Bhaati & Vibhaati

Bhaati means "*self-luminous*". That is why the sun is a very good example for this aspect of the Self. If the sun is thought of as Bhaati, then the visible moon can be thought of as Vibhaati, reflecting its sunlight. Moonshine is borrowed sunshine. In the *Bhagavad Geeta*, the Self is taken as the self-effulgent Bhaati, and numerous significant manifestations (71 of them are mentioned in Discourse 10) are regarded as His *Vibhutis* (note, not Vibhati).

The Bhashya explains: Through the various kinds of effulgence in the "effects", it is known that the characteristic of luminosity is intrinsic to Brahman. That which does not have intrinsic luminosity cannot impart it to others. A pot cannot illuminate others, but a sage can. The Sun is a perfect example of an object which is brilliant and indispensable to life on earth. Hence, it is considered to be a symbol for Brahman Himself.

Acharyaji made an important general point. When the Self is said to be 'self-shining', the philosophical meaning is that Its luminosity is always *available,* whether we perceive It or not. In this sense ***Bhaati*** is equivalent to "*being ever available*".

Let us now see what Lord Yama's reply is to Nachiketas's searching question:

The Guru's Answer: (2.2.15)

5-6 The Self's luminosity, compared to that of the sun, moon, stars, lightning or even the little lamp waved before the Deity during Arati, is in a category all its own.

7-8 Whatever shines in this world, only does so because it is reflecting the shine of the Self in some way. That is the understanding which this verse brings us to.

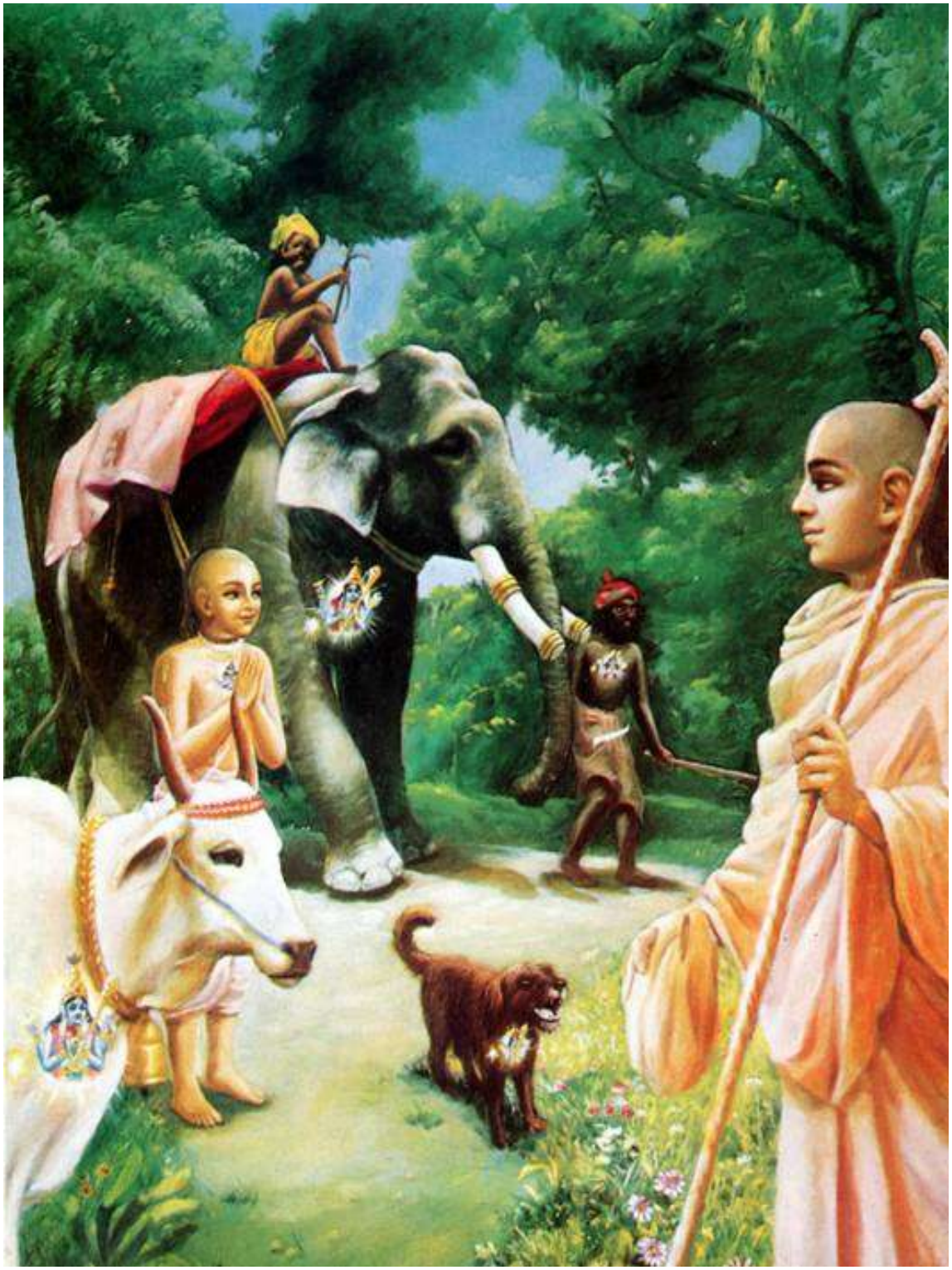
In this way, the Self is declared to be both "uniformly self-effulgent" as well as "variously shining" through every manifestation in creation, large or small, sentient or inert, in varying degrees in accordance with the limitations built into each manifestation.

The Upanishad presents or offers to us a lofty ideal and vision of the world. It is this glorious vision of life that will be taken up in the next and final chapter of this Upanishad.

॥ इति काठकोपनिषदि द्वितीयाध्याये द्वितीया वल्ली ॥

|| iti kāṭhakōpaniṣadi dvitīyādhyāyē dvitīyā vallī ||

*****



The Lord Shines
Through All Beings

Chapter 2.3: (19 verses)

THE GLORIOUS VISION OF LIFE

LORD YAMA HAS ANSWERED Nachiketas's third boon in the previous chapter. The answer has two distinct stages to it. The first is that of Sadhana, wherein we see the seeker's struggle towards self-improvement. The second is attainment of the Goal of Non-duality.

A vision of life emerges, as a result of the Answers 1 and 2 to "What remains?". The three aspects of this vision are:

i) *Glorify the Lord*: We are asked to do our best in reflecting the glory of the Lord through every thought, word and deed;

ii) *Respect All*: We are asked to see everything else that shines around us with great respect, as it is reflecting as best as it can the luminosity of the Lord; and

iii) *Be Magnanimous*: We are challenged to put aside our narrow vision of life and replace it with a magnanimous view of seeing God's Presence immanent as well as transcendent with respect to everything in creation.

In this chapter, we expand on this vision of life, filling in the finer details.

There are numerous similes used in this Upanishad. In addition to the ones we have learnt thus far, in this last chapter we are introduced to the **Ashwatha tree**, made well-known by the Bhagavad Geeta in Discourse 15.

The Bhashya introduces this chapter by explaining the connection of the fruit to the tree. The fruit is the ***Toola*** from which we infer the tree, the ***Moola***.

If we see a tall tree, we can infer that the roots are pretty strong, widespread and deep. By studying the effect we get some clues about the Cause. That is the essence of this chapter, in which the world is symbolized by the tree and Brahman is its roots. This is the *Samsara-Vriksha*, the tree of worldly existence.

THE TREE OF SAMSARA

2.3.1: ***The "Tree of Samsara"***

ऊर्ध्वमूलोऽवाक्शाख एषोऽश्वत्थः सनातनः ।
तदेव शुक्रं तद्ब्रह्म तदेवामृतमुच्यते ।
तस्मिँल्लोकाः श्रिताः सर्वे तदु नात्येति कश्चन । एतद्वै तत् ॥ २.३.१॥

ūrdhvamūlō:'vākśākha ēṣō:'śvatthaḥ sanātanaḥ |
tadēva śukraṁ tadbrahma tadēvāmr̥tamucyatē |
tasmiṁllōkāḥ śritāḥ sarvē tadu nātyēti kaścana | ētadvai tat || 2.3.1||

1	*Oordhwa-moolah avaak shaakhah*	*Having its roots above and branches below –*
2	*eshah ashwatthah sanatanah;*	***This** is the ancient Ashwattha (peepul) tree.*
3	*tat eva shukram tat brahma*	***That** is verily Purity itself, That is Brahman,*
4	*tat eva amritam uchyate;*	***That** is also called the Immortal.*
5	*tasmin lokaah shritaah sarve*	*In **That** rest all the worlds,*
6	*tat u atyeti na kashchana;*	*and none can transcend **That**.*
7	***etat vai tat.***	***This is verily That!***

This verse is a perfect blend of poetry and prose from the pen of the Upanishadic Rishi. It shows what a good teacher Lord Yama is – always referring his student back to first principles, and giving him a variety of ways to understand the Truth.

1-2 The metaphor of the tree is greatly expanded in the Bhashya. The tree represents Samsara, the realm described as **"This"**, which is near and known to us.

TABLE SHOWING ASHWATTHA TREE SYMBOL

	THE SYMBOL		THE MEANING IT REPRESENTS	
	Samskrit	**English**	**English**	**Samskrit**
1	***Ashwatha or Bodhi (ficus religiosa)***	*The Peepul Tree, the holy fig tree*	Worldly existence of joys and sorrows; "that which will not be tomorrow".	*Samsara Vriksha*
2	***Moola***	*root*	Pure Consciousness	*Brahman*
3	***Beeja***	*seed*	ignorance, desire, action	*Avidya, Kama*
4	***Angkura***	*sprout*	the Cosmic Mind	*Hiranyagarbha*
5	***Darpa***	*trunk, branches*	the intellect and the other subtle body parts	*Sukshma Sharira*
6	***Pravala Angkura***	*tender buds*	sense objects	*Vishayas*
7	***Palasha***	*leaves*	learning, logic	*Vedas, Smritis*
8	***Supushpa***	*the lovely flowers*	good deeds: sacrifice, charity and austerity	*Yajna, Dana, Tapas*
9	***Aneka Rasa***	*its various tastes*	happiness and sorrow	*Sukha & Duhkha*
10	***Ananta Phala***	*numerous fruits*	means of subsistence of beings	*Prani Upajeewa*
11	***Baddha Moola***	*secondary roots*	water of desire	*Trishna Jala*
12	***Needa***	*nests (of birds)*	the seven worlds	*Sapta Loka*
13	***Bhoota-Pakshi***	*birds*	all living beings from Brahma downwards	*Sarva Prani*
14	***Bhoota-Maha-Ravo***	*the 'uproar' (of the birds)*	dancing, singing, music, disport, clapping, crying, laughing, pulling	*Nritya, Geeta, Harsha, Shoka, etc.*
15	***Avak-Shakha***	*inferior branches*	heaven & hell, beasts, ghosts, etc.	*Swarga, Naraka, Tiryak, Preta, etc*
16	***Asangha-Shastra***	*The sharp axe of detachment*	felling of the tree, which is liberation	*Moksha*

"THIS" – The Realm of the Unreality (Samsara)

1 This is typical of the language of the Upanishads. Taken literally, this has led to some very queer-looking trees depicted in the pages of books. The most common illustration shows an inverted tree with roots growing into the air! All Upanishadic symbols have to be read philosophically. 'Above' here means "more subtle or of a *higher order*", whilst 'below' means "grosser or of a *lower order*". It does not mean an upside-down tree!

A modern form for the tree metaphor is the **skyscraper.** Like the roots, it also has the foundation below the ground which represent Brahman; and like the trunk, branches, leaves, etc, the skyscraper's visible floors represent the Samsaric world built upon the foundation of Brahman.

2 The common English term is the peepul tree, known in India as Ashwatha or Bodhi tree. It was under one such tree that the Buddha sat in meditation and became enlightened.

Eshah: "*This*". The tree symbolizes the realm of Samsara. There are two reasons for this. The first is that it resembles the endless capacity for *worldly life* to multiply itself. The second is that this tree can be felled with the *axe of dispassion* for worldly objects.

Even though the tree is beginningless, it does have an end if we choose to end it. The end of this tree represents the end of all sorrow. It marks the state of enlightenment, the goal of life in accordance with Vedanta, India's foremost gift to the world.

What is Samsara? Joy and sorrow are the experience of all human beings on earth. Joy is only the "Knock, Knock" for the entry of sorrow! The important point to be noted here is that the moment this tree of Samsara gives us its fruit, namely Vairagya, then its end is near. The time has come for it to be felled by the axe of detachment or dispassion. As soon as Vairagya dawns, the tree of worldliness is doomed to die. Otherwise it has no end, and can go on and on for countless births!

[For keen students, Acharyaji pointed out a literary device called *Dehali Deepa* in the Bhashya. In the sentence that follows, the words in italics stand for the phrase before it as well as after it, doing two duties. "It changes itself every moment, inasmuch as *no sooner is it seen than its nature is destroyed*, like magic or water in a mirage or a city in the sky."]

Another phrase for special attention is 'Pakhanda Buddhi' which implies an intellect with no direction, no right method of determination, changing from one to another and thus subject to hundreds of doubts. True seekers are not confused in this manner.

"THAT" – The Realm of the Supreme Reality

Padas **3-7** are identical to the same Padas in v2.2.8 at the end of the section on the Immanent Brahman. They represent "**That**", which is far away and unknown.

The notes given under 2.2.8 are repeated here (to avoid turning back):

3-5 The nature of the Reality to be attained is described. The basic nature is:

Shukram, Amritam, Shritaah: "*Purity, Immortality and Dependability*". These are basic attributes by which Brahman is known by the intellect. He is the Immortal One behind all the changing names and forms that engage our attention outwardly.

6 Once we attain the goal through developing this nature, there is nothing beyond it to be attained. That is the *summum bonum* of life. The spiritual quest ends here.

7 This is the Mahavakya of this Upanishad. "**This**" is verily "**That**", namely, Brahman.

2.3.2: ***The "Terror of the Thunderbolt"!***

यदिदं किंच जगत् सर्वं प्राण एजति निःसृतम् ।
महद्भयं वज्रमुद्यतं य एतद्विदुरमृतास्ते भवन्ति ॥ २.३.२॥

yadidaṁ kiṁca jagat sarvaṁ prāṇa ējati niḥsr̥tam |
mahadbhayaṁ vajramudyataṁ ya ētadviduram̥tāstē bhavanti || 2.3.2||

1	*Yat idam kincha jagat sarvam*	*This whole universe, with whatever is in it,*
2	*praane ejati nihsritam;*	*emerges from Brahman, and vibrates with Prana.*
3	*mahat bhayam vajram udyatam*	*It instills great terror, with **uplifted thunderbolt**.*
4	*ye etat te viduh amritaah bhavanti.*	*Those who know this become immortal.*

The link passage to this verse explains why this verse was necessary. It helps to answer the doubt that some schools express as to the very existence of Brahman. They believe that creation came out of nothing. These are the Baudhistic schools, the nihilists or the Shunya Vadins.

1-2 Everything in this cosmos is orderly. It follows the laws of nature with mathematical precision. This is what makes our space exploration possible – all planetary movements are predictable as they obey the laws of motion precisely. The landing on the moon would not be possible if these laws were violated even a little bit.

3 The use of words like 'terror' or 'fear' in this and the next verse has to be understood with caution. It is used in a philosophical sense to represent the relationship of order and pure discipline that exists between the Supreme Brahman and all the Deities who execute the running of this vast cosmos.

To emphatically express this order, the fear relationship between a servant and his master is invoked as a simile. In no way does this intend to mean that God is a fearsome dictator demanding obedience. That is not the spirit of the verse. There is a willing harmony and obedience that prevails throughout the cosmos; not an enforced dictatorship.

4 The last sentence is a revelation for all mankind. It tells us that we can attain such a state of harmonious control, as we are part of the cosmos. The Upanishads point the way; if we have not reached that state the fault is ours. We have faltered somewhere in our discipline, in our attitude, in our values. Cosmic governance is built into us, whether we accept it or not. But we have limited ourselves to our body and work only for its sake rather than harmonize with the rest of creation. That places us in direct conflict with the laws of creation and denies to us our inherent power of control. The perfection in the Cosmos indicates the true depth of our own being, attainable through obedience to Nature's Laws.

2.3.3: ***Order in the Cosmos***

भयादस्याग्निस्तपति भयात्तपति सूर्यः ।
भयादिन्द्रश्च वायुश्च मृत्युर्धावति पञ्चमः ॥ २.३.३॥

bhayādasyāgnistapati bhayāttapati sūryaḥ |
bhayādindraśca vāyuśca m̥rtyurdhāvati pañcamaḥ || 2.3.3||

1	*Bhayaat asya agni tapati,*	*For fear of Him Fire burns;*
2	*bhayaat tapati sooryah;*	*for fearof Him the Sun shines;*
3	*bhayaat indrah cha vaayuh cha*	*for fear of Him proceed Indra and Vayu;*
4	*mrityuh dhaavati panchamah.*	*for fear of Him proceeds Death, the fifth.*

Once again we remind ourselves that we are listening to Lord Yama, the God of Death himself. Fear and terror is his language; that is how people understand and relate to him. These are emotions that have been associated with Death from time immemorial. Lord Yama is presenting himself as he is, without any pretence!

But we know Yama by now - his purpose is only to inspire obedience in us.

1 ***Tapati***: "*to burn*". The very sound of this verb reminds us of the sound of fire! Rising flames make the sound – "*tapati*, *tapati*".

2-3 A close relative of '*tapati*' is the sound '*dhavati', the verb* used for the last three Deities. The poetic effect is made more striking by using the word ***Bhayaat*** ("*due to fear*") three times, as though we were invoking fear by uttering his name thrice.

4 There is no rest for Death. Death is running around, ever busy. He is needed all the time. People do not have the patience to wait for him when it comes to dying! Look at what Nachiketas had to go through due to a three-day delay by Yama!

In this verse the "Big Guns" among the Governers of this universe are named. What would happen, asks Shankaracharyaji, if they did not have a Boss to answer to? Who would resolve their quarrels? If these powerful Deities were left to themselves, there could well be a ***Cosmic War*** which would make our World Wars look like child's play! There has to be a more powerful overseer above them. That overseer is the calm and peaceful Brahman.

Acharyaji summarized the message of this verse in his own charming way: ***"Don't lose sight of God! Remember that in reality you are That!"***

THE PRECIOUS HUMAN BIRTH

2.3.4: *Rebirth Continues Until Realisation*

इह चेदशकद्बोद्धुं प्राक्षरीरस्य विस्रसः ।
ततः सर्गेषु लोकेषु शरीरत्वाय कल्पते ॥ २.३.४॥

iha cēdaśakadbōddhuṁ prākṣarīrasya visrasaḥ |
tataḥ sargēṣu lōkēṣu śarīratvāya kalpatē || 2.3.4||

1	*Iha chet ashakat boddhum*	*If one does **not succeed** in realizing here,*
2	*praak shareerasya visrasah;*	*before the fall of the body,*
3	*tatah sargeshu lokeshu*	*then in the worlds of created things,*
4	*shareeratvaaya kalpate.*	*a **rebirth** for the body is ordained.*

1 Spiritual realisation and, with it, the liberation of oneself from the wheel of births and deaths, is brought out in the very first line. If realisation does not happen in this birth, then we have to reborn to continue the spiritual quest. This cycle is called **Transmigration**.

2 What is the urgency behind this? Why has to be done "before one falls from the body", i.e. before we die? Firstly, it is because we can only evolve whilst we are still alive. We cannot evolve without this body. Secondly, the urgency captures the full significance of the preciousness of the human birth to do Sadhana and realise our essential nature.

Visrasah: "*the ultimate or final falling off from the body*". Let us take a closer look at the word. 'Srasah' means "*falling*". Adding the Upasarga (prefix) 'Vi' makes the fall more emphatic; it is not just an ordinary falling off one's bed or couch, but a falling off from the *body* itself! It is Death. It is also not just an ordinary death, but potentially the last Death – the last time one is ever going to die! If one realises, there is no more birth and death.

3-4 Failure to do so will mean endless cycles of embodiments. Whether or not those will be in human forms is also uncertain. There is no guarantee that they will be.

So, are we using this body for the best purpose that it was meant for? If we are not, it is like using the best computer in the world to just play games on it! The body will not complain doing that, of course, but it will be happier doing much more than that! Why not use it to its maximum potential?

The human birth is the bridge to cross to the 'other side', beyond the reach of Samsara. It is bursting with potential to make the biggest crossing ever. Are we going to waste the opportunity given? Divine Grace together with our best effort can make realisation happen for us in this birth itself!

2.3.5: *Four "Worlds" of Clarity*

यथाऽऽदर्शे तथाऽऽत्मनि
यथा स्वप्ने तथा पितृलोके ।
यथाऽप्सु परीव ददृशे तथा गन्धर्वलोके
छायातपयोरिव ब्रह्मलोके ॥ २.३.५॥

yathā:':'darśē tathā:':'tmani
yathā svapnē tathā pitṛlōkē |
yathā:'psu parīva dadṛśē tathā gandharvalōkē
chāyātapayōriva brahmalōkē || 2.3.5||

1	*Yathaa aadarshe tathaa aatmani*	*As in the **mirror**, so it is within one's own Self;*
2	*yathaa svapne tathaa pitruloke;*	*as in a **dream**, so in the world of forefathers;*
3	*yathaa apsu pari iva dadrishe tathaa gandharva-loke*	*as in a **reflection** seen in water, so in the world of the Gandharvas;*
4	*chhaayaa-tapayoh iva brahma loke.*	*as between **light and shade**, so in the world of Brahma.*

This is an unusual verse and well illustrates the need for a qualified teacher from whom we need to learn the scriptures. As it stands, it is hard to fathom what is being said. But this is how Acharyaji unveiled the meaning of this mystical verse:

We have four similes in this single verse. This table lays them out –

No.	SIMILE	Application of Simile	Clarity of Self-Knowledge
1	***Mirror***	*The Human Intellect*	**Perfect** clarity is possible if well-trained
2	***Dream***	*World of the Manes*	**low** clarity, due to Rajasic desires
3	***Water***	*World of Gandharvas*	**medium** clarity, due to Sattwic desires
4	***Shade and Light***	*World of Brahma*	**very high** clarity, but very hard to attain

TABLE SHOWING SIMILES OF THIS VERSE

General Interpretations:

1 This degree of clarity is available to us right now, in this human birth.

2, **3** & **4** The clarity varies in order of increasing difficulty to obtain – low, medium and very high. These have to be earned through gaining merit from good deeds, etc.

1 and **4** are the two options that favour the vision of the Self. Since **4** is professedly hard to attain due to the enormous amount of merit that has to be earned to get there, that leaves **1** the present lifetime as the best option for making an all-out effort to attain clarity.

As in the previous verse, this verse emphasizes the importance of this human birth even more graphically, bringing other options into play.

The explanation of the table is as follows:

Degrees of Clarity Needed for Brahma Jnana

1 What we have available as our finest instrument in this birth is the *intellect*. If we train it properly and make it sharp as well as purify it of all narrow, selfish thoughts, then we have a good chance of grasping the knowledge of the Self thoroughly and making our escape from Samsara, the world of sorrows. The clarity achievable through a pure intellect is near perfect.

2 There are people who earn merit on earth in order to enjoy pleasures in higher worlds. They still have the same low Rajasic desires driving them. Hence, the worlds they go to – viz. up to *Pitruloka* or the world of the Manes – are not so favourable for Self-knowledge. Hardly anyone in these worlds is interested in Brahma Jnana! The clarity of Self-knowledge is like that of a dream; everything is hazy and muddled up, and we cannot even tell whether we are seeing it in colour or in B/W!

3 With a little more merit earned through very pure acts on earth, one earns admission to *Gandharva Loka*, where celestial arts delight one every day. This is a region for very refined tastes to be enjoyed. However, it is still in the realm of Samsara. It cannot give one liberation. The clarity is like seeing through water. Waves render the demarcation of shapes uncertain. If 2 or 3 others are with you when you look into a lake, you may not be sure whose reflection you are seeing, due to the ripples. There is a degree of confusion in the vision. Such confused 'knowledge' is not conducive for understanding the Self.

4 In Brahmaloka, the vision of the Self is very distinct. It is as clear-cut as the difference between light and shade. One can clearly distinguish these. So also one can clearly distinguish the Real from the unreal. But Brahmaloka is very hard to attain. And one who does attain it would already have to be on the spiritual path anyway, having attained some development on it already.

Since this is the situation, why not exercise option ***No 1***, and use this present birth itself to obtain the knowledge of the Self, and then perfect it to realise the Self? On this point, Acharyaji's words were once again very profound:

"A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush – this is an old English proverb. That bird in the hand is the human birth we already have. Use it to the best purpose now itself. What is the point in aiming to reach Brahmaloka? The Shastras have given us all the assurance that human life is very precious and rare. Let us make the best use of it and move ahead."

2.3.6: ***The Dissimilarity of the Senses & Self***

इन्द्रियाणां पृथग्भावमुदयास्तमयौ च यत् ।
पृथगुत्पद्यमानानां मत्वा धीरो न शोचति ॥ २.३.६॥

indriyāṇāṁ pr̥thagbhāvamudayāstamayau ca yat |
pr̥thagutpadyamānānāṁ matvā dhīrō na śōcati || 2.3.6||

1	*Indriyaanaam prithak bhaavam*	*Having known i) the **dissimilarity** of the senses,*
2	*udaya-asta-mayau cha yat;*	*ii) as also their **rising and setting**, and that*
3	*prithak utpadya-maanaanaam*	*iii) they all have separate **origins**,*
4	*matvaa dheerah na shochati.*	*the man of intelligence does not come to grief.*

There are some very smart sceptics who may say:

"What is the need to know the Self in the first place? If the human birth is so precious, why waste it on finding the Self! Why not enjoy ourselves through the senses?" This is more a stance, not a doubt. A doubt can be cleared with an explanation, but a stance cannot. Explanations are futile because such people are not in need of them. Stances need to be *dislodged*, else they are continually justified.

An empty bucket can be filled with the water of 'explanations'; but a bucket without a bottom can never be filled no matter how much water is poured into it. It is need of *fixing*.

With that introduction, Acharyaji said the tip given here is not addressed to the worldly person, but to the sincere seeker, so that he may not get swayed by such arguments put forward to him. **Dispassion** is the answer. Dispassion is the protective shield against such confused logic. This verse tries to provide the shield to the genuine seeker.

Three Defects of the Senses

1 *Their Dissimilarity*: Firstly, the senses are dissimilar to the Self – the two are poles apart. The most important difference is that the two are in different realms of existence. The Self is in the Absolute realm, whereas the senses are in the relative realm.

The senses are by nature outward bound (refer to the 'curse' on them in v2.1.1). They are products or effects of the "veiling" power of Maya. The senses are constantly fluctuating from object to object. On the other hand, the Self is that which is at the very heart or core of our being within. It is unchanging and stable. The two stand in direct contrast to each other.

2 *Senses Rise & Set*: Secondly, the senses 'rise and set', come and go, are enabled and disabled, depending in which of the three states we are. When we wake up, the senses

are said to 'rise'; when we are asleep or in dream, the senses are said to 'set'. The senses become disabled during sleep and enabled in the waking state. Knowing this limitation of the senses, the wise person stays with the permanent, unchanging, ever-available Self. The Self is not a passing visitor. It is constant at all times. It knows no change.

3 *Constitution of the Senses*: Thirdly, there are distinct differences among each of the five senses. Each sense organ originates from a different element. For example, the space element is responsible for the organ of hearing as well as its object, sound. Fire is responsible for sight as well as form. The material cause of the senses are the Rajasic portion of the *subtle elements*, whereas the Self is the *uncaused Cause* of everything.

Thus the senses are different from each other, and jointly they are different from the Self. Each sense is independent of the other. Each has its own task of collecting certain information only about the objects. All are dependent on the Self for their functions.

The Solution: Intelligent Discrimination

4: The wise, intelligent man learns to steer clear of the call of the senses. He does not attach any importance to sensory information because it is so limited and deceptive. By discriminating between the Real and the unreal, he learns to detach himself from his senses and attach himself to the Self. In this way he treads a path that is free from all sources of grief and sorrow.

A sharp, subtle intellect has the discriminative faculty that can clearly see through the false appearances of objects and know their real worth – to produce grief or sorrow. To escape the bondage of grief, the only way is to detach oneself from sense objects with the sword of dispassion. **Viveka** and **Vairagya** (discrimination and dispassion) are needed.

THE LAUNCH PAD OF YOGA

In this section, we cover an important aspect of spiritual Sadhana. It has to be clearly noted that it represents a 'chunk' of the Sadhana and not the whole Sadhana to the Goal.

The 'chunk' consists of all the steps that bring the mind to a standstill by the practice of Yoga. This state is the perfect platform from which to practice intense meditation. To reach the ultimate goal, this state has to be combined with Knowledge of the Self.

2.3.7: ***Ladder from Sense Organs to Total Mind***

इन्द्रियेभ्यः परं मनो मनसः सत्त्वमुत्तमम् ।
सत्त्वादधि महानात्मा महतोऽव्यक्तमुत्तमम् ॥ २.३.७॥

indriyēbhyaḥ paraṁ manō manasaḥ sattvamuttamam |
sattvādadhi mahānātmā mahatō:'vyaktamuttamam || 2.3.7||

1	*Indriyebhyah param manah*	*The **mind** is superior to the **sense organs**;*
2	*manasah sattwam uttamam;*	*the **intellect** is superior to the mind;*
3	*sattwaat adhi mahaan aatmaa*	***Mahat** the great soul is superior to the intellect;*
4	*mahatah avyaktam uttamam.*	*the **Unmanifested** is superior to Mahat.*

2.3.8: ***Ladder from Total Mind to Attributeless Brahman***

अव्यक्तात्तु परः पुरुषो व्यापकोऽलिङ्ग एव च ।
यं ज्ञात्वा मुच्यते जन्तुरमृतत्वं च गच्छति ॥ २.३.८॥

avyaktāttu paraḥ puruṣō vyāpakō:'liṅga ēva ca |
yaṁ jñātvā mucyatē janturamṛtatvaṁ ca gacchati || 2.3.8||

5	*Avyaktaat tu parah purushah*	*But superior to the Unmanifested is the **Purusha***
6	*vyaapakah alinga eva cha;*	*who is pervasive and, indeed, without attributes,*
7	*yam jnaatvaa muchyate jantuh*	*knowing whom a man becomes **freed***
8	*amritatvam cha gacchhati.*	*and moves towards **immortality**.*

These two verses are almost identical to verses 1.3.10 and 1.3.11 in Chapter 1. There they provided the route map for planning the spiritual journey ahead. Now, when we are actually on the journey, we are referring again to the same map.

The Bhashya link passage says: It has just been established in 2.3.6 that the search for the Self can safely omit the sense objects and the senses, for they are too external. The search is thus narrowed down to the "inner equipment" alone, starting with the mind.

1 The senses are ruled out since the **mind** is superior to them.

2 Of the inner equipment, the mind is first to be ruled out as it is in effect the sum of all the sense organs. The **intellect** has greater power than the mind.

3 The **Total Mind (Hiranyagarbha)** is greater than the intellect. The former functions beyond the range of individuality, whereas the latter is limited to individuality.

4 Superior even to the Total Mind is the Causal State, the **Unmanifested (Ishwara)**, who is the origin of the Total Mind. The Causal State is at the helm of the created worlds.

5-6 As we move into v2.3.8, we come to the unconditioned **Brahman**, the Supreme Pure Consciousness, the Self.

7-8 When we move telescopically into this deep inner realm of the Self, we are in the realm of liberation or freedom. The sage who arrives at this point may be described to have attained immortality, as he abides totally in the permanent Self.

The next three verses concern the steps of Yoga which achieve the mastery up to and including the intellect, i.e. the mind is brought to a quiet state *free from all thoughts*. This is Patanjali Yoga up to Step 6 called **Dharana** or concentration. We are preparing ourselves for the *intuitional stage* of the journey that starts with **Dhyana** or meditation.

The focus is on the "inner instrument", the Antahkarana, mainly the intellect. The Sadhana we are dealing with is called the Antaranga Sadhana, the internal Sadhana. The three stages of this Sadhana form the subject matter of these three verses. They are:

i) ***Hridaa Maneesha***: "the control or governance of the mind". (2.3.9)
ii) ***Buddhi Na Vicheshtati:*** "weaning oneself away from all external activity." (2.3.10)
iii) ***Yogam Iti Sthiraam:*** "entering the Yogic state of freedom from thought ". (2.3.11)

We examine each of these three stages of spiritual development from the standpoint of the seeker or Sadhaka.

2.3.9: ***The Subdual of the Mind***

न संदृशे तिष्ठति रूपमस्य
न चक्षुषा पश्यति कश्चनैनम् ।
हृदा मनीषा मनसाऽभिक्लृप्तो
य एतद्विदुरमृतास्ते भवन्ति ॥ २.३.९॥

na saṁdṛśē tiṣṭhati rūpamasya
na cakṣuṣā paśyati kaścanainam |
hṛdā manīṣā manasā:'bhiklṛptō
ya ētadviduramṛtāstē bhavanti || 2.3.9||

1	*Na sandrishe tishthati roopam asya*	*His Form does not exist within the range of vision;*
2	*na chakshushaa pashyati kashchana enam;*	*none can behold Him with eyes (**senses**).*
3	*hridaa **maneeshaa** manasaa abhiklriptah*	*By controlling the **mind** with the **intellect**, then by **intuition** is He revealed.*
4	*ye etat viduh te amritaah bhavanti.*	*Those who know this become **immortal**.*

A. Maneesha – The Conquest of Mind by Intellect (2.3.9):

1-4 In this stage, the intellect has to emerge as the victorious ruler of the mind. This in itself is a huge spiritual milestone, a Sadhana all its own, and occupies the attention of most spiritual seekers throughout their life. This is 80% of the development needed.

The intellect, seated in the heart (the "core of our being"), is the charioteer that we met in Chapter 3. It has to take full control of the reins (mind) and the horses (senses). The focus of its development in this stage is its power of ***Discrimination***. The vagaries of the mind are curbed by the strong affirmations of the intellect that this world is illusory, that sense pleasures are transitory, that indulgence merely drains our energy, and so on. By these intelligent means, the mind and senses are lured away from the danger zones of Samsara. The test one has to pass through is to be free from all preoccupation with sense objects. The Bhashya says, "*Samyoga Darshanam*, a good hard look at the truth behind the world show is needed through Mananam or discriminative reflection."

2.3.10: ***Total Withdrawal of the Senses***

यदा पञ्चावतिष्ठन्ते ज्ञानानि मनसा सह ।
बुद्धिश्च न विचेष्टते तामाहुः परमां गतिम् ॥ २.३.१०॥

yadā pañcāvatiṣṭhantē jñānāni manasā saha |
buddhiśca na vicēṣṭatē tāmāhuḥ paramāṁ gatim || 2.3.10||

5	*Yadaa pancha avatishthante*	*When the "Five" come to rest,*
6	*jnaanaani manasaa sah;*	*i.e. the five **senses** together with the **mind**,*
7	***buddhih** cha na vicheshtati*	*and the **intellect**, too, stops its functioning,*
8	*taam aahuh paramaam gatim.*	*that state (of **intuition**) is said to be the highest.*

B. Buddhi Na Vicheshtate – End of Externalised Activity (2.3.10):

5-6 The yardstick to measure the success of this stage is that all the five organs of knowledge and all five organs of action are able to be withdrawn from their respective objects. This stage is called Pratyahara, which is Step 5 in Patanjali Yoga.

7 On the internal front, Pratyahara necessaily entails the intellect to gradually reduce its thought activity in the mind to the point where, for all practical purposes, it is totally dropped. Eliminating the presence of thoughts in the mind is eessential not to distract one's attention from the Self. The purpose here is to make the mind and intellect wholly focus on the Self. This requires great subtlety of the intellect.

Acharyaji gave us a good idea of the intellect's usual activities: endless thinking, analyzing, deciding, determining, consenting, authorizing, prompting, suggesting, etc. All these go on endlessly in an untrained intellect. For spiritual pursuit, these have to be curbed and then brought to a complete halt. Then the next stage of growth can take place.

8 When the Sadhaka achieves success in arresting the thoughts from arising, it is a major breakthrough in Sadhana. This verse praises this achievement as being the highest. We shall soon see that it is not really the highest, but to encourage the Sadhaka it is declared to be so, because it leads one to the highest goal. This is the style of the scriptures where that which is being discussed is given an elevated status to make us want to do it. It is positive encouragement to the lone seeker.

2.3.11: ***The Launch Pad – A Quiet Mind***

तां योगमिति मन्यन्ते स्थिरामिन्द्रियधारणाम् ।
अप्रमत्तस्तदा भवति योगो हि प्रभवाप्ययौ ॥ २.३.११॥

tāṁ yōgamiti manyantē sthirāmindriyadhāraṇām |
apramattastadā bhavati yōgō hi prabhavāpyayau || 2.3.11||

9	*Taam **yogam** iti manyante*	*"That is **Yoga**", declare the wise ones,*
10	*sthiraam indriya dhaaranaam;*	*"where there is firm control over the **senses,***
11	*apramattah tadaa bhavati*	*and one is freed from the vagaries of the **mind**."*
12	*yogah hi pra-bhavaap-yayau.*	*But even this quiet Yogic state **comes and goes**.*

C. Yogam Iti Sthiram – Yogic State Free of Thought (2.3.11):

9-11 In the Patanjali Yoga Sutras, Yoga is described at the very outset as ***Chitta-Vritti Nirodhah*** – "the destruction of all thoughts in the mind". Success in ending all external activity culminates in this state. As we have seen in other texts, notably *Upadesh Sara*, this is not the end of Sadhana but a *perfect platform* or "Launching Pad" from which to enter into deep meditation on the Self. When the stillness of the intellect is achieved, the meditator's focus is unimpeded. The quiet mind achieved through Yoga launches one into meditation.

12 However, the Yogic state of stillness can fluctuate, i.e. grow and decay, or come and go according to the Guna that is predominant. In itself, when divorced from the knowledge of the Self, it is of no permanent spiritual value. If the stilled mind is not focussed on the Self, great vigilance is needed to ensure that when thoughts return they do not throw one into a mode of desire. Vigilance holds at bay all lurking desires.

That vigilance is needed actually underlines the fact that Yogic quietude of mind is a temporary state, induced by means such as breath control or the power of intellect over mind. This cannot be sustained for too long, unless one uses it to establish himself in the Self. That is the ultimate purpose of bringing the mind to a quiet state.

We have come to the limit of the intellect's role in spiritual growth. The stage is now set for the next section, which deals with the ultimate achievement of union of the Self.

THE FINAL LAP INTO ETERNITY

The next four verses are taken individually as each verse deals with a particular aspect of the spiritual journey. They deal with the final 'chunk' of spiritual Sadhana which requires knowledge of the Self and takes one "*beyond the reach of mind and speech*." This is the *Intuitional Phase* of the spiritual journey.

2.3.12: *"He Exists" – Minimum Qualification*

नैव वाचा न मनसा प्राप्तुं शक्यो न चक्षुषा ।
अस्तीति ब्रुवतोऽन्यत्र कथं तदुपलभ्यते ॥ २.३.१२॥

naiva vācā na manasā prāptuṁ śakyō na cakṣuṣā |
astīti bruvatō:'nyatra kathaṁ tadupalabhyatē || 2.3.12||

1	*Na eva vaachaa na manasaa*	*Not through speech, nor through mind,*
2	*praaptum shakyah na chakshushaa;*	*nor through the eye can It be attained.*
3	*"Asti", iti bruvatah anyatra*	*Apart from him who speaks of It as "**He exists**"*
4	*katham tat upalabhyate?*	*how can it ever be known (to others)?*

The link passage to this verse explains its objective: Those who believe strongly that the intellect is the highest instrument available to man to acquire knowledge, may be faced with a doubt after the last verse which asks that all the functions of the intellect have to be ended. They will say, "All knowledge is specifically apprehended as this or that by the intellect. If there is no instrument left for cognition, then nothing can be known. In such a case, the Self has to be regarded as a non-entity, surely! Either Yoga is useless or Brahman has to be taken to be non-existent."

The Self Not Knowable Through Intellect

1-2 This verse explains why the Self is beyond the reach of senses and mind.

1. The fact that the Self cannot be known by our existing instruments of learning, especially the intellect, is as it should be. The Self has no physical attributes. It is unlike any other object that can be known by the intellect of man.

2. Although without such attributes, yet we know from the scriptures that It does exist. In matters such as the Self, the only means of knowledge that apply to It is the scriptures. That is the only 'logical' means to be adopted. We cannot ignore the guidance we get from scriptures.

3. The scriptural means are not illogical. They may appear so, but that is not true. Since the object of analysis is beyond the scope of science, we have to take the scriptures as a guide to direct us to the Self. This can be a temporary measure, until such time direct experience of the Self confirms the truth of the scrriptures. Once we have direct experience, then the scriptures, too, become redundant!

4. If the world came from non-existence, we would see the aspect of non-existence clearly in all of creation. But we do not see that; we see it only as 'existing'. So Existence must be their cause, not non-existence.

To conclude, the doubt about the existence of the Self merely shows how much we are used to knowing things through our mind and senses. Our vision is turned outward from birth. We need to make a fundamental change in our learning orientation.

"He Exists"

3-4 Now the Rishi unequivocally states that the starting point for Self-enquiry has to be a belief or faith that the "Self exists". If that is not accepted then there is no point in pursuing this quest at all. It would be meaningless to talk of the Self to those who do not accept it, even if it be only in principle.

Example 1: Hundreds of air passengers board planes daily all over the world. Every single one of does so because he has the basic belief that there is a pilot in the cockpit. Those who do not have this belief, will certainly not board the plane.

Example 2: Millions of people deposit money in banks all over the world. They do so because they have the firm belief that their money is safe and available when they need it.

Verse 1.3.1 clearly lists the three types of seekers for whom the quest for the Self is applicable because they believe "It exists". The three are:

i) ***Brahmavidah***: "*the knowers of Brahman*", who are guided by the *Jnana Kanda*.

ii) ***Pancha-Agnayah***: "*performers of the 'Five Fires'*", guided by the *Karma Kanda*.

iii) ***Tri-Nachiketaah***: "*those who perform the Nachiketas Fire three times*", guided by the *Upasana Kanda*.

Even though each of these three worshippers have their own agenda in worshipping the Supreme, they nevertheless all believe that "He exists", and believe, too, that He is able to grant them what they pray for.

2.3.13: ***Faith Earns Favour to Go Further***

अस्तीत्येवोपलब्धव्यस्तत्त्वभावेन चोभयोः ।
अस्तीत्येवोपलब्धस्य तत्त्वभावः प्रसीदति ॥ २.३.१३॥

astītyēvōpalabdhavyastattvabhāvēna cōbhayōḥ |
astītyēvōpalabdhasya tattvabhāvaḥ prasīdati || 2.3.13||

1	*"Asti" iti eva upalabdhavyah*	*i) The Self should be realized first as "**It exists**";*
2	*tattva bhaavena cha ubhayoh;*	*and then, ii) as "**It really is**" in essence. Of these two,*
3	*"Asti" iti eva upalabdhasya*	*when "**It exists**" is believed or accepted on faith, then*
4	*tattva bhaavah praseedati.*	*"**It really is**" becomes more favourable to one.*

This may be considered as a key verse from a Sadhaka's point of view. It contains in it the correct attitude that a seeker must have to have any hope of realizing the Self. There is the strong message to have faith and stay 'in the good books' of the Self in order to move further ahead on the spiritual path.

Two distinct stages of progress on the spiritual path are identified here:

	SOPADIKA DRISHTHI	NIRUPADIKA DRISHTHI
1	Starting point, for the *Beginner*	Later stage, for the more *Advanced*
2	Accepted on *Faith*, even if fragile.	Faith grows into a *Firm Conviction*.
3	Self Seen as *Existence* (Upalabdhavya)	Self-revealed as *It Really Is* (Tattwa Bhava)
4	Self seen as *Conditioned* by Upadhis	Self is *Unconditioned*, free from Upadhis
5	Self is *Immanent*, within every being	Self is *Transcendent*, all-pervasive

TABLE SHOWING DISTINCT STAGES OF ENLIGHTENMENT

1 This verse takes up the thread from the previous verse, where it was made clear that the minimum requirement for a seeker is to at least have faith that the Self exists, that there is no such thing as non-existence. The logic for this has already been explained.

2 Taking us to the next stage of understanding, this verse emphasizes to the seeker the value of learning to recognise the Self from our current position of progress, however far it may be from the final stage. All the descriptions about the Self being all-pervasive, non-dual, full of Bliss and pure Consciousness are not untrue, but they need not hinder one at the beginning of the path. We are asked to start with faith from where we are.

3 What does that mean to us? The step by step progression described in *Chandogya Upanishad* ("Tat Twam Asi", Section 1) is quoted in the Bhashya. This takes us step by step from name and form to the highest stage of seeing the nameless and formless Self.

We are being taught to see everything as the Self, from the conditioned to the unconditioned, from the immanent to the transcendent. What was earlier seen as simply existing, appears in the later stage in its real aspect as transcendent Truth.

4 A very important point expressed here is that by the very fact of our having faith in the existence of Existence, we are made *deserving* to be pulled further up in our understanding. The Self showers Its Grace upon us and reveals Its real nature to us. It may be a very gradual unfoldment, but it is certainly taking place, little by little.

Great patience is required on this path to the Self. We make a gradual shift from the conditioned Self to the unconditioned Self.

We can take the help of Vedic texts which prescribe the method of "Not this, Not this" to break down the barriers that stand between our intellect and the Self. This is called the process of negation. By this process we bring down the walls of the Upadhis such as the body and mind. As we get lesser and lesser entangled by the dividing walls of the Upadhis, we come to a greater and greater clarity of vision of the Self, which is our own true spiritual essence.

*****

2.3.14: ***Desirelessness Leads to Immortality***

यदा सर्वे प्रमुच्यन्ते कामा येऽस्य हृदि श्रिताः ।
अथ मर्त्योऽमृतो भवत्यत्र ब्रह्म समश्नुते ॥ २.३.१४॥

yadā sarvē pramucyantē kāmā yē:'sya hr̥di śritāḥ |
atha martyō:'mr̥tō bhavatyatra brahma samaśnutē || 2.3.14||

1	*Yadaa sarve pramuchyante*	*When all fall off or are given up totally,*
2	*kaamaah ye asya hridi shritaah;*	*i.e. all **desires** that still dwell in the heart;*
3	*atha martyah amritah bhavati*	*then the mortal becomes **Immortal**,*
4	*atra brahma sam-ashnute.*	*and he attains **Brahman** even here (while living).*

This verse speaks of the fruit of Brahma Jnana or knowledge (realization) of the Self.

1 As our understanding of the Self increases, as shown in the previous verse, the desires that bind us to the lower stages get loosened and fall away. When all such clinging desires fall off, due to there being nothing left to be desired other than the all-satisfying Self, that is said to be the state of enlightenment.

2 The desires are seated in the mind. A Vedic verse says, "Desire, thought, doubt, etc. – all these are in the mind." This verse draws different reactions from people depending on what philosophy appeals to them. A Vedantin will see this verse as pointing the way to renunciation of desires as he is interested in dissolving his mind. There is the opposite reaction from those who believe that the mind is the ultimate Reality. To them this verse is taken as sanction for wanton indulgence in desires. They see it in a totally different light. This is why Acharyaji has always warned us to know what we want in life, to follow the principles of Vedanta wholeheartedly, and never to allow ourselves to be distracted by other materialistic philosophies whose exponents are very convincing and charming.

The Bhashya on Immortality:

3 The third line of the verse is beautifully covered by Sri Shankaracharyaji.

He who was mortal before enlightenment, becomes immortal after. This is because death is due to ignorance, desire and deeds. These three cause the body to be born and therefore to die. In the view of the enlightened sage, death itself is eliminated as he has gone beyond identification with his body. As the sage is completely identified with the Self, there is no such thing as death to him. This is the meaning of immortality. Shankaracharya is uncompromising in his definition of death – to him the death of the *body* is no death at all. The real death is *forgetfulness of the Self*.

Looked at another way, when bondage to the body has ceased, there is no possibility of death or 'departure from the body'. The cessation of bondage is regarded by Shankaracharyaji as the blowing out of a lamp.

4 Thereafter, one merges with Brahman Itself. Becoming immortal and attaining Brahman are synonymous. They are not two separate events; they are one event described in two different ways.

Atra: "*here*". This means even here, while one is still living in the body. This is unlike gaining 'heavenly worlds', which can only happen after we die, not while still living.

2.3.15: ***What is Desirelessness?***

यदा सर्वे प्रभिद्यन्ते हृदयस्येह ग्रन्थयः ।
अथ मर्त्योऽमृतो भवत्येतावद्ध्यनुशासनम् ॥ २.३.१५॥

yadā sarvē prabhidyantē hṛdayasyēha granthayaḥ |
atha martyō:'mṛtō bhavatyētāvaddhyanuśāsanam || 2.3.15||

1	*Yadaa sarve prabhidyante*	*When all get shattered (or are destroyed),*
2	*hridayasya iha granthayah;*	*i.e. all the **knots of the heart**;*
3	*atha martyah amritah bhavati*	*then the mortal becomes **Immortal**.*
4	*etaavat anu-shaasanam.*	*This alone is the teaching.*

This verse, almost a repeat of the previous one, concludes the essential teaching of this Upanishad. The subtle difference is perhaps the reference to "knots of the heart", which lead us to understand exactly what desires are – they are knots which bind us to the root of ignorance or delusion.

1-2 The key question answered here is: "What are desires?" Knowing the answer to this, we can pursue the question "How can we cease our desires?" Desires are *knots of* which need to be untied or snapped off in the heart, the seat of our emotions.

Ignorant concepts held by the mind are primarily "I am the body", "This is my wealth", "I am enjoying or suffering". Naturally, the best way to destroy such concepts is to generate their opposite concept "I am Brahman, not just a transmigrating soul". When this latter thought gains ground, the former knots become loosened. When it is perfectly established, the knots are completely eradicated. Thus the establishment of the counter-thought, called ***Brahmakara Vritti***, is the acid-test of when our desires have been destroyed.

Acharyaji further explained, ***"Desire is the signature of incompleteness."*** We all have to some degree the feeling of a lack of joy or zest in life. We try to smother it by taking recourse to some form of exciting activity. This merely provides titillation of the nerves but does not remove the underlying malady. Acharyaji's suggestion is to root out the very inclination of sense attraction. "We must tell the body 'Bye-bye' before it tells the same to us! When there is not even a twitch of the nerve wanting sense objects, that is absolute mastery of the senses." This is the meaning of Swami, which means 'a Master'.

Helping us to remove our desires is how saints help us to attain mastery. Pujya Gurudev, knowing this secret, used to admit people of all types, even with many desires, into the Ashram. He would then make them start the Sadhana to purify themselves. He did not wait for them to be desireless before admitting them. In the Sadhana stage there are bound to be desires. Only in perfection does it reduce to 0%.

3 And why is there so much of emphasis given to Desirelessness? It is because the reward is so great. It is nothing short of immortality. How can the Immortal be achieved just for a song! It is to be expected that the highest price has to be paid for it.

4 The verse ends on the note that this much alone is the teaching of the scriptures. There is no other secret teaching being withheld. Nachiketas has been told the full knowledge; now it is for him to practise it and attain perfection.

In Lord Yama's estimation he is almost there!

THE PHALA OR REWARD OF SADHANA

2.3.16: ***The "Nerves" of the Heart***

शतं चैका च हृदयस्य नाड्य-
स्तासां मूर्धानमभिनिःसृतैका ।
तयोर्ध्वमायन्नमृतत्वमेति
विष्वङ्न्या उत्क्रमणे भवन्ति ॥ २.३.१६॥

śataṁ caikā ca hṛdayasya nāḍya-
stāsāṁ mūrdhānamabhiniḥsṛtaikā |
tayōrdhvamāyannamṛtatvamēti
viṣvaṅṅanyā utkramaṇē bhavanti || 2.3.16||

1	*Shatam cha ekaa cha hridayasya naadyah*	*A hundred and one in number are the channels of the heart.*
2	*taasaam moordhaanam abhinih sritaa ekaa;*	*Of them, towards the crown of the head passes through one of them (the Sushumna).*
3	*tayaa oordhwam aayan amritatvam eti*	*Going up through that channel, one gets immortality.*
4	*vishvak anyaa utkramane bhavanti.*	*The others that have different directions, become the causes of death.*

To help us understand the philosophic import of this verse, especially the "different directions", Acharyaji gave a lengthy 3-Part introduction on: A. Pralayas; B. Goals; and C. Lokas, as conceived by the Hindu religious scriptures, the Vedas.

A. PRALAYAS – Cosmic Cycles of Creation and Dissolution:

A second aspect introduced to understand this verse is connected to the various time cycles related to the creation cycle. There are 4 main time cycles or Pralayas.

i) ***Nitya Pralaya:*** This is the normal day and night cycle that we know. It regulates our personal lives, dividing our time into waking and sleep states.

ii) ***Naimittika Pralayas:*** There are several of these specific time cycles. The one related to a day of Brahmaji is worth noting. It is many thousands of our years.

iii) ***Prakrita Pralaya:*** This is when the entire creation dissolves into Prakriti, the seed state of creation. It occurs at the end of each Yuga or age, which is 100 years of Brahma! At this juncture, the next Brahmaji gets appointed. Our scriptures have predicted that Sri Hanuman will be the next Brahmaji.

iv) ***Atyantika Pralaya:*** This is the great spiritual dissolution of Ignorance itself by the Knowledge of the Self. This is what has to be attained through realization of the Self. It has no relation to the time-scale mentioned so far. It is beyond Time. It is the attainment of the Supreme Brahman Himself.

B. GOALS – The Three Attainments

We now touch on the subject of the goals that humans set for themselves:

i) ***Jivanmukti:*** Through the practice of intense Sadhana based on the knowledge of the Selff, many have attained spiritual enlightenment or liberation from the wheel of births and deaths in this very lifetime. These are the *Jivanmuktas*, of all times and climes. Relative to the human population they form a microscopic minority among men. This is the highest goal offered by the Vedas, and is taught in the *Jnana Kanda* portion.

ii) ***Krama Mukti:*** The second category also get liberation, but their route is different. They go through many steps before reaching the goal, hence the name – 'Krama' means 'step'. In Krama Mukti, the person accepts that there is a Divine Being governing the activities in the world. He accepts that there has to be proper rules and regulations in this governance, known as the Laws of Karma. He works in obedience to these laws and usually starts by earning *merit* and avoiding *demerit* (Paapa and Punya). Accumulating merit, he first attains the higher worlds named above. After many such 'vacations' in these worlds, he is finally convinced that he has to do selfless Karma without merit and demerit to liberate himself from rebirths. Dying with such a conviction, he *may* go to Brahmaloka, where he gets further instruction from Brahmaji on the Self. He then has to wait for the end of the Prakrita Pralaya before being granted Krama Mukti. Alternately, he may take another human birth in a good family and continue the Path to liberation.

iii) ***Path of Samsara:*** The overwhelming majority of mankind fall into this category, where there is not yet any inclination for the spiritual path. These souls simply revolve in endless cycles of births and deaths, until such time when it dawns upon them that life is meant for further spiritual evolution towards liberation.

C. LOKAS – An Overview of Various Worlds

There are many Lokas, or worlds, or planes of existence that one can attain depending on the Karmas and Upasanas done while on earth. These are destinations to which one may go *after death*.

i) ***Performance of Rites and Rituals of the Karma Kanda:***

In the Hindu tradition, there are the Pancha-Agnis or keeping the Five Fires (rituals) (mentioned in v1.3.1) by devout, pure-hearted householders who aim to attain the fivefold fruit of heaven, the intermediate region called 'Clouds', earth, man and woman. Similarly, there are the Five Waters (also rituals) named Shraddha, Somarga, Vrishti, etc, to attain other desirable earthly benefits. These are attained through rituals that are not related to Brahman in any way. They constitute the lower end of the scale of attainments prescribed in the *Karma Kanda* of the Vedas. However, they are all based on principles of righteousness or Dharma.

ii) ***Performance of Upasanas of the Upasana Kanda:***

In the Vedas there is a portion called *Upasana Kanda* aimed at obtaining a religious or spiritual ends beyond the earth-plane. This worship is broadly classified as ***Saguna Upasana*** (worship of God with form and attributes).

If the *Avataras* Rama and Krishna are viewed as Deities other than Supreme Non-dual Brahman, then their worship falls into this category. In Vedic times there used to be worship of *Deities* such as Hiranyagarbha (the Cosmic Mind), Virat (the Cosmic gross world), Asambhooti (the Unmanifest or Prakriti, prior to Hiranyagarbha), and others like Varuna, Indra, Agni, etc. These take their devotees forward spiritually to some extent by making them adhere to basic Dharmic principles, but the goal is some heavenly world.

The pleasures of earth are shunned or sacrificed in order to enjoy similar but more intense pleasures in heavenly worlds. Some of these Upasanas require severe austerities of the nature of self-denial of earthly comforts. However the ultimate aim is not freedom from desire, but desire of a more refined and higher type not available on earth.

This is very much like earning a tourist visa to various heavenly worlds to enjoy heavenly pleasures for varying durations, according to the merit earned. Once the merit is spent, these souls have to come back to earth to earn more merit.

The Meaning of this Verse (2.3.16):

With the above background we are now in a position to interpret the above verse. The interpretation connects with the various Goals described under **B** above.

1 The nerves emanating from the heart represent one's **Desires**. There are numerous desires which burn in the bosom of the human heart, and the goal attained depends on which desires are entertained. The number '**101**' is the equivalent of saying 100% of desires.

2 i) ***Jivanmuktas:*** The channel leading out through the crown of the head is called Sushumna Nadi. Realized souls or Jivanmuktas go through this channel directly. They merge with the Supreme Brahman as they have destroyed their individual personalities. The number '**1**' here is equivalent of saying only 1 desire remains – that for God and God alone.

3 ii) ***Krama Muktas*** (Upasakas and some Karmakas also): This is an alternate path to attain liberation, the same goal as above, but via a differeent route. Qualifiers for Krama Mukti also go out through this channel, but to *relative* immortality, that is, to one or the other of the higher worlds where they will be for very long periods, waiting for the end of the Pralaya in Brahmaloka, as above described.

4 iii) ***The Pleasure Seekers*** (third category): These go out of their body through the numerous (100) other channels each of which leads them to the loka which they deserve to go to according to their actions done on earth. These are the 'heavens and hells' spoken of in the scriptures. After spending some time there, experiencing what is essential for their growth (usually severe pains), they swoop back down to earth into the wombs of creatures, not necessarily humans, and continue to live the ordinary animalistic lives until sufficient experience of sorrow awakens them to the life of higher values.

2.3.17: ***Final Summary of the Teaching***

अङ्गुष्ठमात्रः पुरुषोऽन्तरात्मा
सदा जनानां हृदये संनिविष्टः ।
तं स्वाच्छरीरात्प्रवृहेन्
मुञ्जादिवेषीकां धैर्येण ।
तं विद्याच्छुक्रममृतं
तं विद्याच्छुक्रममृतमिति ॥ २.३.१७॥

aṅguṣṭhamātraḥ puruṣō:'ntarātmā
sadā janānāṁ hṛdayē saṁniviṣṭaḥ |
taṁ svāccharīrātpravṛhēn
muñjādivēṣīkāṁ dhairyēṇa |
taṁ vidyācchukramamṛtaṁ
taṁ vidyācchukramamṛtamiti || 2.3.17||

1	*Angushtha-maatrah purushah antahaatmaa*	*Of the size of a thumb, the Purusha, the indwelling Self,*
2	*sadaa janaanaam hridaye sanni-vishtah;*	*is ever seated in the hearts of men.*
3	*tam svaat shareeraat pra-vriheta*	*One should separate Him from one's body*
4	*munjaat iva isheekaam dhairyena;*	*unerringly like a stalk from the Munja grass.*
5	*tam vidyaat shukram amritam*	*Him one should know as pure and immortal.*
6	*tam vidyaat shukram amritam, iti.*	*Him one should know as pure and immortal.*

With this restatement of the central message of the entire Upanishad, the Katha Upanishad concludes. The explanation of this verse is largely covered by verses 4.12/13.

1-2 Symbols like this one, of the thumb, can be interpreted variously. In the context of the Katha Upanishad, in which Brahman is recognized at every level of creation, it may be interpreted as the superiority of Brahman relative to Ishwara, Hiranyagarbha, Virat, Indra, etc, just as the thumb is undoubtedly outstanding relative to the other four fingers.

3-4 The general spiritual knowledge of the entire Upanishad explains these lines. The process of negation of the five sheaths till the Self alone remains is summarized here.

Dhairyena: Acharyaji made special mention of this word, translated above as "*unerringly*". This word has many connotations in its usage. It represents all that is bold and courageous on the spiritual path. It carries with it a sense of vigilant practice, outstanding effort, care and meticulousness, fearlessness, patience, etc. All these are suggested by the use of this word.

5-6 The Ultimate Goal or Reality, which forms the theme of the entire Upanishad, is mentioned fittingly as the conclusion to this text. The repetition of the line is an Upanishadic convention, signifying that the text is now closed.

2.3.18: ***Conclusion of the Upanishad***

मृत्युप्रोक्तां नचिकेतोऽथ लब्ध्वा
विद्यामेतां योगविधिं च कृत्स्नम् ।
ब्रह्मप्राप्तो विरजोऽभूद्विमृत्यु-
रन्योऽप्येवं यो विदध्यात्ममेव ॥ २.३.१८॥

mr̥tyuprōktāṁ nacikētō:'tha labdhvā
vidyāmētāṁ yōgavidhiṁ ca kr̥tsnam |
brahmaprāptō virajō:'bhūdvimr̥tyu-
ranyō:'pyēvaṁ yō vidadhyātmamēva || 2.3.18||

1	*Mrityu-proktaam nachiketah atha labdhvaa*	*Nachiketas has been instructed by Lord Yama. As a result he has attained*
2	*vidyaam etaam yoga-vidhim cha kritsnam;*	*this **Knowledge** of the Self and also the whole process of Yoga;*
3	*brahma-praaptah virajah abhoot vimrityuh*	*A knower of **Brahman**, free from all **impurities**, he has become, freed forever from the **grip of death**.*
4	*anyah api evam yah vit adhyaatmam eva.*	*Any other seeker, too, can become the same if he knows the inner Self in the same way.*

And what about our hero, Nachiketas – what happens to him? A verse is dedicated to his achievement, which symbolizes the greatness of the Upanishadic teaching.

1-2 It goes without saying that Nachiketas falls into Category 1 among students of this knowledge. He has attained Brahman and become a Jivanmukta *par excellence*.

3 The attainment of Nachiketas is threefold:

i) He becomes a knower of Brahman, and thereby *becomes Brahman*;

ii) He is freed of all impurities, meaning that he is established in the *Non-dual state*, wherein there is nothing other than the pure Consciousness; and

iii) He is freed from the clutches of Death, meaning that he no longer takes birth in a body; he is free from *Transmigration* forever.

A fourth attainment is added by the Bhashya: iv) "Having become free from virtue and vice, he also becomes free from *Desire and Ignorance* – by knowing Brahman."

4 Others can also follow Nachiketas's example and attain the same if they are willing to make the same sacrifices as him and pursue ***Yoga Viddhi***, the knowledge and process of Yoga, in its entirety.

Acharyaji's concluding words of encouragement to us were:

"The Ganges of Knowledge is there – we just need to go to it with our waterpot and have our fill!"

2.3.19: ***The Valedictory Prayer***

सह नाववतु । सह नौ भुनक्तु । सह वीर्यं करवावहै ।
तेजस्विनावधीतमस्तु मा विद्विषावहै ॥
॥ ॐ शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः ॥

1	*Om saha naav avatu;*	*May He protect us both (by revealing knowledge)!*
2	*saha nau bhunaktu;*	*May He protect us both (by vouchsafing the results of knowledge)!*
3	*saha veeryam karavaavahai;*	*May we exert with vigour together!*
4	*tejasvi naav adheetam astu;*	*Let what we study be invigorating!*
5	*maa vidvishaavahai;*	*May we not cavil at each other!*
6	*Om shaantih shaantih shaantih!*	*Om Peace, Peace, Peace!*

With this prayer the Upanishad closes. This verse is chanted at the start of all classes in Vedanta, virtually throughout the world. It invokes the correct attitude that has to exist between teacher and student for this knowledge to bear fruit.

॥ इति काठकोपनिषदि द्वितीयाध्याये तृतीया वल्ली ॥

|| iti kāṭhakōpaniṣadi dvitīyādhyāyē tr̥tīyā vallī ||

*****

॥ ॐ तत् सत् ॥

|| ōm̐ tat sat ||

Om Tat Sat!

SRI RAMA