

Katha Upanishad 2.3

Second Cycle: Third Chapter

ūrdhva-mūlo'vāk-śākha eṣo'śvatthaḥ sanātanah/
tad eva śukraṃ tad brahma tad evāmṛtam ucyate/
tasmiṃllokāḥ śritāḥ sarve tad u nātyeti kaścana etadvai tat 1

Yama speaks:

1. "This is an eternal Ashwattha-tree whose root is above, but its branches are downward. It is He that is called the Bright One and Brahman, and Immortality, and in Him are all the worlds established, none goes beyond Him. This is That thou seekest.

yad idaṃ kiñca jagat sarvaṃ prāṇa ejati niḥsṛtam/
mahad bhayaṃ vajram udyataṃ ya etad vidur amṛtās te bhavanti 2

2. "All this universe of motion moves in the Prana and from the Prana also it proceeded: a mighty terror is He, yea, a thunderbolt uplifted. Who know Him, are the immortals.

bhayād asyāgnis tapati bhayāt tapati sūryaḥ/
bhayād indraś ca vāyuś ca mṛtyur dhāvati pañcamaḥ 3

3. "For fear of Him the Fire burns: for fear of Him the Sun gives heat: for fear of Him Indra and Vayu and Death hasten in their courses.

iha ced aśakad boddhuṃ prāk śarīrasya visrasaḥ/
tataḥ sargeṣu lokeṣu śarīratvāya kalpate 4

4. "If in this world of men and before thy body fall from thee, thou wert able to apprehend it, then thou availest for embodiment in the worlds that He creates.

Vocabulary:

visras,(prob.) f. *dropping down, debility, decay* (abl. -srasaḥ also as inf.) RV. AV. Br.

yathā''darṣe tathātmani yathā svapne tathā piṭṛloke/
yathāpsu parīva dadṛṣe tathā gandharvaloke chāyātapayor iva brahmaloke 5

5. "In the self one sees God as in a mirror but as in a dream in the world of the Fathers: and as in water one sees the surface of an object, so one sees Him in the world of the Gandharvas. But He is seen as light and shade in the heaven of the Spirit.

indriyāṇām pṛthagbhāvam udayāstamayau ca yat/
pṛthag utpadyamānānām matvā dhīro na śocati 6

6. "The calm soul having comprehended the separateness of the senses and the rising of them and their setting and their separate emergence, puts from him pain and sorrow.

indriyebhyaḥ paraṃ mano manasaḥ sattvam uttamam/
sattvād adhi mahān ātmā mahato'vyaktam uttamam 7

7. "The mind is higher than the senses, and higher than the mind is the genius, and above the genius is the Mighty Spirit, and higher than the Mighty One is the Unmanifested.

avyaktāt tu paraḥ puruṣo vyāpako'liṅga eva ca/
yaṃ jñātvā mucyate jantur amṛtatvaṃ ca gacchati 8

8. "But highest above the Unmanifested is the Purusha who pervades all and alone has no sign nor feature. Mortal man knowing Him is released into immortality.

na samdṛṣe tiṣṭhati rūpam asya na cakṣusā paśyati kaścanainam/
hṛdā manīṣā manasābhikṣpto ya etad vidur amṛtās te bhavanti 9

9. "God has not set His body within the ken of seeing, neither does any man with the eye behold Him, but to the heart and the mind and the super-mind He is manifest. Who know Him are the immortals.

yadā pañcāvatiṣṭhante jñānāni manasā saha/
buddhiś ca na viceṣṭati tām āhuḥ paramāṃ gatim 10

10. "When the five senses cease and are at rest and the mind rests with them and the higher mind ceases from its workings, that is the highest state, say thinkers.

tāṃ yogam iti manyante sthirām indriyadhāraṇām/
apramattas tadā bhavati yogo hi prabhavāpyayau 11

11. "The state unperturbed when the senses are imprisoned in the mind, of this they say 'It is Yoga.' Then man becomes very vigilant, for Yoga is the birth of things and their ending.¹

¹ Shankara interprets, "as Yoga has a beginning (birth) so has it an ending". But this is not what the Sruti says.

naiva vācā na manasā prāptuṃ śakyo na cakṣuṣā/
astīti bruvato'nyatra katham tad upalabhyate 12

12. "Not with the mind has man the power to get God, no, nor through speech, nor by the eye. Unless one says 'He is', how can one become sensible of Him?"

astītyevopalabdavyas tattvabhāvena cobhayoḥ/
astītyevopalabdhasya tattvabhāvaḥ prasīdati 13

13. "One must apprehend God in the concept 'He is' and also in His essential: but when he has grasped Him as the 'Is', then the essential of God dawns upon a man.

yadā sarve pramucyante kāmā ye'sya hṛdi śritāḥ
atha martyo'mṛto bhavaty atra brahma samaśnute 14

14. "When every desire that finds lodging in the heart of man, has been loosened from its moorings, then this mortal puts on immortality: even here he tastes God, in this human body.

yadā sarve prabhidyante hṛdayasyeha granthayaḥ/
atha martyo'mṛto bhavaty etāvad dhy anuśāsanam 15

15. "Yea, when all the strings of the heart are rent asunder, even here, in this human birth, then the mortal becomes immortal. This is the whole teaching of the Scriptures.

śataṃ caikā ca hṛdayasya nāḍyas tāsām mūrdhānam abhiniḥṣṛtaikā/
tayordhvam āyann amṛtatvam eti viśvañ anyā utkramaṇe bhavanti 16

16. "A hundred and one are the nerves of the heart, and of all these only one issues out through the head of a man: by this his soul mounts up to its immortal home, but the rest lead him to all sorts and conditions of births in his passing.

aṅguṣṭhamātrāḥ puruṣo'ntarātmā sadā janānāṃ hṛdaye sanniviṣṭaḥ/
taṃ svāc-charīrāt pravṛthen muñjād iveśīkām dhairyena/
taṃ vidyāc-chukram amṛtaṃ taṃ vidyāc chukram amṛtamiti 17

17. "The Purusha, the Spirit within, who is no larger than the finger of a man is seated for ever in the heart of creatures: one must separate Him with patience from one's own body as one separates from a blade of grass its main fibre. Thou shalt know Him for the Bright Immortal, yea, for the Bright Immortal."

Vocabulary:

muñja, m. 'sounding, rustling', a species of rush or sedge-like grass, (which grows to the height of 10 feet , and is used in basketwork) ŚBr. &c. &c.
 iṣika/ā, a reed , rush , stem or stalk of grass used as an arrow AV. vii , 56 , 4;
 n. the point or upper part of a reed Kauṣ. ChUp.

mṛtyu-proktāṃ naciketo'tha labdhvā vidyām etāṃ yogavidhiṃ ca kṛtsnam/
 brahmaprāpto virajo'bhūd vimṛtyur anyo'py evaṃ yo vid adhyātmam eva 18

18. Thus did Nachiketas with Death for his teacher win the God-knowledge: he learned likewise the whole ordinance of Yoga: thereafter he obtained God and became void of stain and void of death. So shall another be who comes likewise to the Science of the Spirit.

Vocabulary:

virajas, mfn. free from dust &c. MBh. Kāv. &c.
 vid, mfn. knowing, understanding, a knower KaṭhUp. Mn. MBh. &c.; f.
 knowledge understanding RV. KaushUp.