

Upadesha Sahasri of Shankaracharya

Metrical Section Chapter 1

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चैतन्यं सर्वगं सर्वं
Consciousness – all-pervasive, all,
caitanyaṃ sarvagaṃ sarvaṃ

सर्वभूतगुहाशयम् ।
abiding in the hearts of all,
sarva-bhūta-guhāśayam

यत् सर्वविषयातीतं
beyond all objects –
yat sarva-viṣayātītaṃ

तस्मै सर्वविदे नमः ॥
unto that all-knowing one, salutations.
tasmai sarva-vidē namaḥ 1.1

समापय्य क्रियाः सर्वा
After teaching all rituals,
samāpayya kriyāḥ sarvā

दाराग्न्याधानपूर्विकाः ।
preceded by marriage and establishing a sacred fire,
dārāgnyādhāna-pūrvikāḥ

ब्रह्मविद्यामथेदानीं
next, knowledge of brahman
brahma-vidyām athedānīm

वक्तुं वेदः प्रचक्रमे ॥
the Veda proceeds to teach.
vaktuṃ vedaḥ pracakrame 1.2

कर्माणि देहयोगार्थं
Actions lead to getting a body,
karmāṇi deha-yogārthaṃ

देहयोगे प्रियाप्रिये ।
having a body leads to likes and dislikes,
deha-yoge priyāpriye

ध्रुवे स्यातां ततो रागो
leading to raga and dvesha,
dhruve syātāṃ tato rāgo

द्वेषश्चैव ततः क्रियाः ॥
leading to further actions...
dveṣaś caiva tataḥ kriyāḥ 1.3

धर्माधर्मौ ततोऽज्ञास्य

...leading to good and bad karma for the ignorant,
dharmādhārmau tato 'jñāsya

देहयोगस्तथा पुनः ।

which leads to getting another body.
deha-yogas tathā punaḥ

एवं नित्यप्रवृत्तोऽयं

Thus, this eternally ongoing
evaṃ nitya-pravṛtto 'yaṃ

संसारश्चक्रवद् भृशम् ॥

cycle of birth and death continues.
saṃsāraś cakravad bhṛśam 1.4

अज्ञानं तस्य मूलं स्याद्

Ignorance is the cause for samsara,
ajñānaṃ tasya mūlaṃ syād

इति तद्धानमिष्यते ।

therefore it's destruction is sought.
iti tad dhānam iṣyate

ब्रह्मविद्यात आरब्धा

So, knowledge of brahman is now taught
brahma-vidyāta ārabdhā

ततो निःश्रेयसं भवेत् ॥

through which liberation is gained.
tato niḥśreyasaṃ bhavet 1.5

विद्यैवाज्ञानहानाय

Knowledge alone can destroy ignorance,
vidyaivājñāna-hānāya

न कर्माप्रतिकूलतः ।

not action, which is not opposed to ignorance.
na karmāpratikūlataḥ

नाज्ञानस्याप्रहाणे हि

As long as ignorance remains,
nājñānasyāprahāṇe hi

रागद्वेषक्षयो भवेत् ॥

raga and dvesha cannot be removed.
raga-dvēṣa-kṣayo bhavet 1.6

रागद्वेषक्षयाभावे

As long as raga and dvesha remain,
raga-dveṣa-kṣayābhāve

कर्म दोषोद्भवं ध्रुवम् ।

action, born of them, will certainly arise.
karma doṣodhavaṃ dhruvam

तस्मान् निःश्रेयसार्थाय

Therefore, for the sake of liberation,
tasmān niḥśreyasārthāya

विद्यैवात्र विधीयते ॥

knowledge alone is ordained.
vidyaivātra vidhīyate 1.7

ननु कर्म तथा नित्यं
(PP) But obligatory rituals
nanu karma tathā nityam

कर्तव्यं जीवने सति ।
must be done while you live.
kartavyam jīvane sati

विद्यायाः सहकारित्वं
By assisting knowledge,
vidyāyāḥ saha-kāritvam

मोक्षं प्रति हि तद् व्रजेत् ॥
they lead to liberation.
mokṣam prati hi tad vrajet 1.8

यथा विद्या तथा कर्म
(PP) Knowledge and rituals
yathā vidyā tathā karma

चोदितत्वाविशेषतः ।
are both ordained.
cōditatvāviśeṣataḥ

प्रत्यवायस्मृतेश्चैव
Also, to avoid sins of omission,
pratyavāya-smṛteś caiva

कार्यं कर्म मुमुक्षुभिः ॥
obligatory rituals must be done by seekers of liberation.
kāryam karma mumukṣubhiḥ 1.9

ननु ध्रुवफला विद्या
(S) But knowledge has a definite result
nanu dhruva-phalā vidyā

नान्यत् किञ्चिदपेक्षते ।
that depends on nothing else.
nānyat kiñcid apēkṣate

नाग्निष्टोमो यथैवान्यद्
(PP) But agnishtoma has a definite result,
nāgniṣṭōmo yathaiṅnyad

ध्रुवकार्योऽप्यपेक्षते ॥
yet it depends on something else.
dhruva-kāryo 'py apekṣate 1.10

तथा ध्रुवफला विद्या
(PP) Likewise, knowledge, having a definite result,
tathā dhruva-phalā vidyā

कर्म नित्यमपेक्षते ।
depends on obligatory rituals.
karma nityam apekṣate

इत्येवं केचिदिच्छन्ति
(S) Some people hold this view,
ity evam kecid icchanti

न कर्म प्रतिकूलतः ॥
but action is incompatible (with knowledge).
na karma pratikūlataḥ 1.11

विद्यायाः प्रतिकूलं हि
Action is incompatible with knowledge
vidyāyāḥ pratikūlaṁ hi

कर्म स्यात् साभिमानतः ।
because it requires false identification.
karma syāt sābhimānataḥ

निर्विकारात्मबुद्धिश्च
Understanding atma to be unchanging
nirvikārātma-buddhis ca

विद्येतीह प्रकीर्तिता ॥
is knowledge, according to the scriptures.
vidyētīha prakīrtitā 1.12

कारकाण्युपमृद्नाति
Factors like doership, etc. are destroyed
kārakāṅy upamṛdnāti

विद्याऽबुद्धिमिवोषरे ।
by knowledge, like mirage water in the desert.
vidyā buddhim ivoṣare

इति तत्सत्यमादाय
Thus, how could one accept those factors as real
iti tat satyam ādāya

कर्म कर्तुं व्यवस्यति ॥
and engage in action?
karma kartuṁ vyavasyati 1.14

अहं कर्ता ममेदं स्याद्
"I am the doer. This is mine,"
ahaṁ kartā mamedam syād

इति कर्म प्रवर्तते ।
thinking thus, one performs action.
iti karma pravartate

वस्त्वधीना भवेद् विद्या
Knowledge depends on that which is known,
vastvadhīnā bhaved vidyā

कर्तधीनो भवेद् विधिः ॥
but action depends on the doer.
kartadhīno bhaved vidhiḥ 1.13

विरुद्धत्वादतः शक्यं
Because they are opposed, it is impossible
viruddhatvād ataḥ śakyaṁ

कर्म कर्तुं न विद्यया ।
for one with knowledge to perform action.
karma kartuṁ na vidyayā

सहैवं विदुषा तस्मात्
Therefore, a wise seeker of liberation
sahaivam viduṣā tasmāt

कर्म हेयं मुमुक्षुना ॥
should renounce action.
karma heyam mumukṣunā 1.15

देहाद्यैरविशेषेण

As being identical with the body, etc.

dēhādyair aviśeṣeṇa

देहिनो ग्रहणं निजम् ।

atma is naturally considered

dēhino grahaṇam nijam

प्राणिनां तदविद्योत्थं

by people, due to their ignorance.

prāṇinām tad-avidyottham

तावत् कर्मविधिर्भवेत् ॥

When ignorance is present, rituals are ordained.

tāvat karma-vidhir bhavet 1.16

नेति नेतीति देहादीन्

By “neti neti,” the body, etc.

neti netiti dēhādīn

अपोह्यात्मावशेषितः ।

is negated, leaving only atma.

apohyātmāvaśeṣitaḥ

अविशेषात्मबोधार्थं

To gain knowledge of unconditioned atma,

aviśeṣātma-bodhārtham

तेनाविद्या निवर्तिता ॥

ignorance is removed by “neti neti.”

tenāvidyā nivartitā 1.17

निवृत्ता सा कथं भूयः

When ignorance is removed

nivr̥ttā sā katham bhūyaḥ

प्रसूयेत प्रमाणतः ।

by scriptural knowledge, how could it arise again?

prasūyeta pramāṇataḥ

असत्येवाविशेषे हि

It is absent in the unconditioned,

asaty evāviśeṣe hi

प्रत्यगात्मनि केवले ॥

non-dual, inner Self.

pratyag-ātmani kevale 1.18

न चेद् भूयः प्रसूयेत

If ignorance does not arise again,

na ced bhūyaḥ prasūyeta

कर्ता भोक्तेति धीः कथम् ।

how could one be a doer or enjoyer,

kartā bhokteti dhīḥ katham

सदस्मीति च विज्ञाने

when one knows, “I am the real.”

sad asmīti ca vijñāne

तस्माद् विद्यासहायिका ॥

Therefore, knowledge needs no assistance.

tasmād vidyāsahāyikā 1.19

अत्यरेचयदित्युक्तो

As being superior, thus
atyarecayad ity ukto

न्यासः श्रुत्यात एव हि ।

renunciation is described by the scriptures,
nyāsaḥ śrutyāta eva hi

कर्मेभ्यो मानसान्तेभ्य

better than action, including mental action.
karmebhyo mānasāntebhya

एतावदिति वाजिनाम् ॥

“Knowledge alone,” the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad says...
etāvad iti vājinām 1.20

नैककारकसाध्यत्वात्

Rituals are done in many ways
naikakāraka-sādhyatvāt

फलान्यत्वाच् च कर्मणः ।

and yield various results,
phalānyatvāc ca karmaṇaḥ

विद्या तद्विपरीतातो

so knowledge is unlike them. Therefore,
vidyā tad-viparītāto

दृष्टान्तो विषमो भवेत् ॥

the comparison is incorrect.
dṛṣṭānto viṣamo bhavet 1.22

अमृतत्वं श्रुतं तस्मात्

leads to immortality. Therefore,
amṛtatvaṃ śrutaṃ tasmāt

त्याज्यं कर्म मुमुक्षुभिः ।

action should be renounced by seekers of liberation.
tyājyaṃ karma mumukṣubhiḥ

अग्निष्टोमवदित्युक्तं

“Like the agnishtoma,” was said before.
agniṣṭomavad ity uktaṃ

तत्रेदमभिधीयते ॥

For that argument, here is the reply:
tatredam abhidhīyate 1.21

कृष्यादिवत् फलार्थत्वाद्

Because, like farming, it produces results
kṛṣyādivat phalārthatvād

अन्यकर्मोपबृंहणम् ।

with the assistance of other actions,
anya-karmopabr̥mhaṇam

अग्निष्टोमस्त्वपेक्षेत

agnishtoma depends on other factors.
agniṣṭomas tv apekṣeta

विद्यान्यत् किमपेक्षते ॥

On what else does knowledge depend?
vidyānyat kim apekṣate 1.23

प्रत्यवायस्तु तस्यैव
Sins of omission are for one
pratyavāyas tu tasyaiva

यस्याहंकार इष्यते ।
who as an ego.
yasyāhaṁkāra iṣyate

अहंकारफलार्थित्वे
But neither ego or desire
ahaṁkāra-phalārthitve

विद्येते नात्मवेदिनः ॥
exist for a knower of atma.
vidyete nātma-vedinaḥ 1.24

तस्मादज्ञानहानाय
Therefore, to destroy ignorance
tasmād ajñāna-hānāya

संसारविनिवृत्तये ।
to put an end to samsara,
saṁsāra-vinivṛttaye

ब्रह्मविद्याविधानाय
to establish knowledge of reality,
brahma-vidyā-vidhānāya

प्रारब्धोपनिषत् त्वियम् ॥
this Upanishad is now taught.
prārabdhopaniṣat tv iyam 1.25

सदेरुपनिपूर्वस्य
The root *sad* with the prefixes *upa* and *ni*
sader upa-ni-pūrvasya

क्विपि चोपनिषद् भवेत् ।
with the *kvip* affix form the word Upanishad,
kvipi copaniṣad bhavet

मन्दीकरणभावाच् च
because it causes the weakening
mandīkaraṇa-bhāvāc ca

गर्भादिः शातनात् तथा ॥
and destruction of birth, etc.
garbhādeḥ śātanāt tathā 1.26