

KAIVALYA UPANISHAD ON UPAASANA

Kaivalya Upanishad belongs to Atharva Veda and it is one of the striking Upanishads among the 'Minor' ones, especially because of its poetic diction, systematic development of thought, scientific arrangement of ideas, as also the comprehension of its vision and the richness of philosophy. It contains Upaasana mantras that ordain the loving meditation upon Brahman in different ways and as characterized by different attributes. Four Mahaavakyas of Upanishads are the vedic mantras prescribed for Japayoga, which is strongly hinted in this Upanishad.

Of about 280 Upanishads unearthed so far, 108 have been accepted as authentic texts and out of them, eleven have been commented upon by the recent master-minded Achaaryas like Sri Sankara, Ramanuja, and Madhvacharya and are classified as major. Other Upanishads are considered as minor, not on account of their contents, or in the depth of their thoughts, or in the completeness of their exposition, but because no commentaries are available from the great Achaaryas on these.

Satarudriya is a prayer of hundred stanzas, very sacred and inspiring, invoking Rudra, i.e. Lord Siva, which forms part of Taittiriya Samhita of the Yajurveda. This was chanted by devotees with ardent faith and total dedication even during the vedic period, as is chanted today. The great commentator Narayana calls the Kaivalya Upanishad as Brahma Satarudriya i.e., the Satarudriya that glorifies "Brahman" as opposed to the Personal God, Lord Siva. Kaivalya in Samskrit means "mere". Kaivalya is the noun form of "Kevala" therefore Kaivalya means "mereliness" meaning homogeneous "oneness". Naturally, the result (Kaivalya) is the total awakening from all delusions and delusory sense of limitations.

Faithful to the Upanishadic tradition, in Kaivalya Upanishad we have a student approaching the teacher demanding knowledge. It must be noted the teacher here is not the average type, and the teacher is none other than the Creator, Brahma Himself. Asvalaayana, the great teacher of Rigveda is the student here. It is this that makes this Upanishad most valuable amongst the minor Upanishads. Initially dwelling on Upaasana and worship, this Upanishad deals with the theme of the Vedas —invoking, approaching, and realizing the one and the same Infinite Reality, the golden chord of Uniformity that holds all together, directly approaching the problem. With minimum words, the entire picture of evolution of man and the subtle techniques of attaining the State of Self Realization have been revealed.

Addressing Brahma, Sage Asvalaayana requests him: "to teach him the highest science of Reality, cultivated always by the good people, which is ever a hidden secret for man, a knowledge by which a wise man, discarding all sins, can reach the Highest Purusha" in the first stanza. By the term 'secret' it is not meant here that it is a knowledge that cannot be given to others; it only means that it is a knowledge which will be beyond our comprehension until we are initiated into it by some experienced teacher. The student is here demanding that knowledge, by which he can transcend his casual body and come to apprehend and live the Universal Truth, the one Life Eternal which expresses itself as a universe of multiple forms and names.

To this, Brahma replies: “Know this by means of faith, devotion and meditation (Sraddha, Bhakti and Dhyana). Immortality is attained not by work, nor by progeny, nor by wealth, but by renunciation alone. Higher than heaven, sealed in the cave of the intellect, It shines, which the seekers attain.”—2. “By liquidating our identification with the body, mind and intellect alone we can reach ‘the still moment of meditation’ and therein alone we can awaken ourselves to the Universal Truth and enter the plane of God-consciousness, transcending even the state of sleep (no pain).”—3. “Those who are pure in mind, striving through the path of renunciation, come to ascertain clearly the deeper imports of the Knowledge, which is the theme of the Vedanta; they in the end, gain the World of Brahma (Brahmaloka), and liberating themselves from every thing gain the Highest Immortality.” --4.

Then in the next mantra, the student is given the following advice in order to bring about the necessary quietness in the mind. The mind is constantly distracted and disturbed by the compelling attractions of the outer world-of-objects and the irresistible inner desire that erupt from the intellect: “In an undisturbed place, clean and pure, resting in a comfortable posture, with neck, head and body held in one line, in a mental attitude of Sannyasa having controlled all the senses, saluting ones own teacher mentally with reverence, meditate within the lotus of the heart (on Brahman), the Untainted, the Pure, the Clear and the Griefless.”—5.

A relaxed mind brings a more poignant and vigilant mind for the purpose of contemplation. Cleanliness for the spiritual seeker is both within and without. The place selected for meditation must be clean and healthy spot where there is no possibility of any disturbance. During meditation the vertebral column must be held erect and perpendicular to the base (yoga posture for meditation). Heart in philosophy is not the biological organ that pumps blood to feed the circulatory system. In philosophy ‘heart’ stands for ‘the nobler emotions in man that make him human.’ That arena in the human mind from where the noble urges of love, kindness, mercy, forgiveness, tolerance etc., flow out is called the ‘heart’. Therefore, ‘within the lotus of the heart’ means in a bosom that cherishes these virtues and so, to a large extent, peaceful and serene, contented and fulfilled. In an attitude of reverence sitting comfortably in a quiet place, the mantra commands us to meditate upon the Great Self.

What exactly is the inner process of meditation and how to contemplate are described in the following stanzas. Some may meditate upon Self as a formless ideal, others may meditate upon It through a simple form, an idol representing the ideal. In either case the realization is for the same goal. Therefore the mantra says, meditate upon: “The Unthinkable, the Un-manifest, the One of endless forms, the Ever-auspicious, the Peaceful, the Immortal, the Origin of the very Creator, the One without a beginning, a middle and an end, the Only One, the All-pervading, the Knowledge-Bliss, the Formless and the Wonderful”—6.

Here in these thirteen terms the Eternal Truth, the Self has been indicated for the purpose of contemplation ‘in the cave of the heart’. To contemplate upon them is to realize ultimately ‘That’--Tat tvam asi, which all of them together indicate.

In order to meditate upon the Formless Infinite, a certain amount of subtlety of the intellect is to be developed. The immature is to be prepared for the flight in contemplation, in the beginning, by a relatively simpler process of worship and concentration upon the symbol of the Formless Absolute. This process is described in the following stanza: “By meditating upon Lord Parameswara, consorted by mother Uma, the All-powerful, the Three-eyed, the Blue-necked and the Ever-tranquil, a true man of reflection reaches Him, the highest Lord, who is the source of all the manifest world, the witness of all, and who is beyond all darkness’—7.

Here in this mantra, Kaivalyopanishad recommends upaasana to Maheswara and his consort Uma. It further clarifies that this will lead the seeker to Brahman. At the very outset it is necessary to dispel any misconception that this Upanishad looks apparently sectarian, in so far as it glorifies only Siva, who is one of the Trinity—Brahma, Vishnu and Siva. This as well as other upanishads and other scriptures proclaim that Brahma, Vishnu and Siva of the Trinity are only the functional aspects of Easwara, the manifestation of the Supreme Spirit, who is all pervading and who has no form or name. The Rigveda says; “Ekam sad vipraa bahudaa vadanti”, meaning, there is only one Almighty God whom the learned ones give several names. Narayana Sooktam which glorifies the Supreme Being ends with “Sa Brahma, sa Siva, sa Harih, sa Aksharaha, Paramaha Svaraata”, meaning, He is Himself Brahma, Siva, Vishnu, Everything Eternal, the great Self-luminous (svarat). The Mahabharata, in Vishnusahasranama says, “Vishnum Jishnum, Mahavishnum, Prabha Vishnum Maheswarah” meaning the Supreme Omnipotent Being pervading everywhere is known as Mahavishnu and Maheswara and by various other names and forms. In the various verses of Sivandalahari of Sri Sankaracharya, the Lord is addressed as “Vibhu” meaning “All- pervading Entity” which obviously refers to the Supreme Being without name or form, like the word Vishnu meaning all pervading. The word Siva means ‘auspiciousness’. As such these words Siva and Vishnu refer to all forms and names of the Supreme Being.

This experience arising out of devoted concentration upon Lord Parameshwara, is the experience of the Supreme. That which is experienced through worship, of the form symbol (sagunopaasana) is ultimately, the Immutable Transcendental Reality. All idols though different in form and conceived in different attitudes, symbolize but the One Supreme Consciousness, which in its real nature transcends all of them. Based upon this principle of everyday experience, Brahma, the great teacher of Kaivalya Upanishad asserts: “He is Brahma, He is Siva, He is Indra, He is the Immutable (Akshara) He is Supreme, the Self-luminous (swaraata), He alone is Vishnu, He is Praana, He is Time and Fire, He is the Moon (the Great Self within us).”—8.

The Upanishads expound Brahman by different names such as: Sath, Atma, Brahman, Akshara, Praana, Jyoti, Purusha, etc. All the general names culminate in the specific name of Narayana. He is the one cause of everything in this Universe. He has transcended

everything else and has none equal to him or greater than him. In his immanent aspect he is residing as 'Antaryamin' or the 'Inner controller' in the caves of the hearts of all the people. He is necessarily characterized by all auspicious qualities and is opposed to all that is defiling. The Upanishads describe that Brahman has the five qualities—'Satyam', 'Jnanam', 'Anantam', 'Amalam' and 'Aanandam'. These determine Brahman's essential nature.

This theme is expounded in Kaivalyopanishad as well as in many other Upanishads and also in Geeta. Narayanopanishad also says: Narayana designated as the Supreme Purusha willed to create all beings. The Vital Airs, the Mind and all the Sense-organs are born of Narayana. The five elements viz. Ether, Air, Fire, Water and Earth that support all entities are born of Narayana. The four faced Brahma, Rudra and Indra are born of Narayana. It is from Narayana that Prajapati is born. The twelve Adityas, the eleven Rudras, the eight Vasus and all the vedic meters like Gayatri are born of Narayana. All these entities are born of Narayana and they function on account of Narayana. They merge in Narayana. Narayana is eternal. Brahma is Narayana, i.e. has Narayana as his innerself. Siva is Narayana as Narayana is his innerself. Indra is Narayana as he is his innerself.

Kaivalyopanishad stanzas dwelling on this Transcendental Consciousness proclaim all that was in the past, and all that will be in the future are nothing but the expression of Him, the one Eternal Reality, Lord Parameshwara.

“He alone is all that was, and all that will be, the Eternal. Knowing Him, one goes behind the sting of death. There is no other way to reach complete freedom”—9. “Experiencing one's own Self in all beings and all beings in the Self, one attains the Highest Brahman-- and not by any other means.”—10. “The Self deluded by Maaya, is he who identifying with the body does all actions (all perceptions, feelings and thoughts). In the waking state it is he (this Jeeva) who reaches full gratification through the varied objects of enjoyment such as woman, food, wine etc.”—12. “The very same individualized ego in the 'dream state' experiences its pleasures and pain—in a field of existence created by its own Maaya (misapprehension of Reality). During the 'state of profound sleep' when everything is merged (into the casual state), it is overpowered by Tamas (non-apprehension) and comes to exist in its form of Bliss.”—13. “Again due to its connection with the deeds done in its previous births, very same individuality (Jeeva) comes back to the dream or waking state. The being, who sports thus in the three cities—from whom verily have sprung up all diversities, He is the substratum, the indivisible Bliss-Consciousness and in Him alone the three cities go into dissolution.”—14.

Kaivalyopanishad says: “making the ego the 'lower Arani' and Om the 'upper Arani' through the practice of repeated churning of knowledge, 'Jnaana nirmathana abhyaasa', a wise man burns up all the chords of bondage.”—11. In the bygone days, the sacred altar for ritualism was lit up with fire freshly invoked by the continuous rubbing of two pieces of wood. This equipment is called Arani and the process is similar to churning of the butter called 'churning of the fire.' Using this metaphor to explain what happens in the inner life of the seekers, it is said, the 'lower block' is the ego attitude in us; the 'upper block' is the Pranava meaning Om which is the sound symbol of the Infinite Life, the

Self-divine. When these two are connected together and the Lower-Self is uplifted to the glowing nature of the Higher-Self, through contemplation and steady meditation, the seeker loses his identifications with his outer layers of matter.

Kaivalyopanishad urges the seeker to meditate upon Brahman and then goes on to describe the Eternal Brahman in the next few stanzas.

“From Him are born the Praana (Vital Airs), the mind, all the organs, the sky (Aakaasa), the wind (Vaayu), the fire (Jyoti), the water (Aapaha) and the earth (Prithvi) which supports all”—15. “That which is the Supreme Brahman, the Self in all, the ample support of the Universe, subtler than the subtle and Eternal—That alone art Thou, Thou alone art That”—16. Then the teacher assuming the role of Brahman, gives a description of himself thus: “That which illumines the world of relative experiences lived in the waking, dream and sleep conditions, that Brahman am I—and realizing thus, one is liberated from all shackles”—17. “All that constitutes the enjoyable, the enjoyer and the enjoyment in the three realms... different from them all am I, the Witness, the Ever-auspicious, Pure Consciousness”—18. “In me alone everything is born; in me does everything exist and in me alone everything gets dissolved. I am that non-dual Brahman”—19. “I am smaller than the smallest and also am I the vastest. I am the manifold Universe-amazing; I am the Ancient One; the Purusha; the Supreme Ruler am I, the Effulgent One; by nature Ever-auspicious”—20. “I am without hands and legs; of incomprehensible power. I see without eyes, hear without ears. Devoid of all forms, I know everything and there is none that knows me. I am ever Pure- Knowledge.”—21. “I alone am the theme taught in the different Vedas. I am the revealer of the Upanishads, the Vedanta and I alone am the real knower of the Vedas. For me there is neither merit nor demerit. I suffer no destruction. I have neither birth, nor body, nor sense organs, nor the mind-intellectual equipment”—22. “For me there is neither earth nor water, nor fire, nor air, nor ether. Thus realizing the nature of Paramaatman—the one who is in the cavity of the heart, which is without parts, without a second, the Witness of all, beyond both the existence and non-existence, one attains the very nature of Paramaatman”—23-24.

At the close of this Upanishad we find two more mantras as part 2, PP-1 and PP-2 describing the Phalapraapti (fruit of the upaasana): “He who studies the Satarudriya becomes purified by fire, is purified from the sin of drinking, is purified by the sin of killing a learned one, is purified from the sin arising from all commissions and omissions. Therefore he gains his refuge in the One who never leaves the Truth Consciousness, Siva, the Supreme Self. One who belongs to the highest order of Life should repeat this always or at-least once a day.”—PP 1. “By this one attains the knowledge that destroys the endless experience of changes (repeated transmigration). Therefore having experienced this, one attains the fruits of liberation (Kaivalya); indeed one attains Kaivalya.”—PP 2.

To a devotee of Lord Rudra in vedic days, the Satarudriya, the title given to the hundred stanzas in Taittiriya Samhita of Yajurveda, was very sacred and inspiring and is believed so by all followers of Siva even today. Siva is also called Rudra by the Sagunopaasaka worshippers of Saivism propagated by Sankaraachaarya. In the very centre of Satarudriya occurs the word “Om Namah Sivaaya” (obeisance to Lord Siva). Several learned sages

during the post vedic period and puraanic days have made a pointed reference to this fact to stress the importance given to Siva in vedic days, though Brahman was addressed as Siva, to mean the 'Auspicious One' then. Similarly in vedic days Brihaspati and Indra were addressed as Ganapathi (group leader). Here the very divinely Kaivalyopanishad is denoted by the same divinely suggestive title, Satarudriya.

This Upanishad is to be repeated and chanted with the same reverence as Satarudriya. With the joyous assertion guaranteeing a cent percent success for all true and serious seekers, the Upanishad concludes.

This Upanishad recommends Parameshwara Upaasana with a pure mind. This statement of the Upanishad can raise a serious doubt in the mind of the seekers. Is idol worship justified? Can it provide a helpful prop for the meditative mind to swing on and dive into the Infinite? Therefore we see even Arjuna in Geeta (Ge. Ch. XII-I) raising the question as to whether he should seek, love and meditate upon the infinite form of the Formless or upon the manifested Divinity of the Lord of the Cosmos (Viswaroopa), before him? To this Lord Krishna replies: "Those who worship the Imperishable, the Indefinable, the Un-manifest, the Omnipresent, the Unthinkable, the Immovable and the Eternal—having restrained all the senses, even minded everywhere, rejoicing ever in the welfare of all beings--verily, they also come unto Me. Greater is their trouble whose minds are set on the 'Un-manifest'; for the goal, the 'Un-manifest is very hard for the embodied to reach. But those who worship Me, (in Saguna form) renouncing all actions in Me as the Supreme Goal, meditating on Me with single minded devotion (yoga) to save them; for them, whose minds are set on Me, verily I become ere long, Oh Partha, the Savior out of the ocean of finite experiences, the Samsaara (Ge. Ch.-XII-3 to 7).

Here Krishna prescribes certain definite conditions to be faithfully followed by all meditates upon the Form-of-the-Lord and concludes that those that are following His instructions fully, will be relieved from their mortal limitations, by the Lord Himself, on whose form they are contemplating. A careful study of those conditions will show us how the devotee grows mentally to a stature so divine and high, that thereafter he needs no help from any one at all. But, in the beginning, a seeker needs some assurances from his teacher in order to instill in him the required self-confidence to start his practice.

This statement may look as an exaggeration to the finite mortal, who is standing agitated and shy at the gateway of the temple of Truth. In his habitual concept that he is a finite mortal entity, pressed under a thousand limitations, suffering from a host of imperfections, and persecuted by an army of despairs, he fails to accept that he can rediscover himself to be Himself, the ever divine! Therefore, as a kind teacher, Lord Krishna assures the disciple, that he need not wonder how he will go beyond sorrows, agitations and imperfections, which are the lot of all mortals. "I shall be their savior" is a divine assurance and an infinite guarantee. It is possible that seekers may become rather impatient when, even after months and years of practice, they do not come anywhere near any spiritual experience. Therefore, the Lord's assurance also indicates the time limit. Bhagavan says that He will save the seeker from his own imperfections 'ere long' (na chiraat).

This lecture is abridged and edited for Vedanta class at Sri Ganesha Temple by N.R.Srinivasan, from the following publications:

1. Swami Chinmayananda, Vedanta the Science of Life, Central Chinmaya Mission Trust, Mumbai.
2. Swami Chinmayananda, Bhagavad Gita, Central Chinmaya Mission Trust, Mumbai.
3. Dr N.S.Anantarangacharya, Selections from the Upanishads, Bangalore.
4. Swami Chinmayananda, Kaivalya Upanishad, Central Chinmaya Mission Trust, Mumbai.
5. S.Balakrishnan, Sankara on Bhakti, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Mumbai.

Chanting of Rudram:

The fourth Khanda (part) of Krishna Yajurveda, Taittereya Samhita called Vaisvadeva Khanda, section five, contains Rudra Prasna and Chamaka Prasna. Ardent devotees of Shiva, chant these daily at home and in temples while praying to Shiva.

Lord Shiva destroys the evil and bestows Bliss and Immortality on those who do Rudra Paaraayana daily. He is "Ausuthoshin" easily pleased. The easiest method of propitiating Him is by chanting of Rudram.

Chant Rudraprasna also called Namaka, once. Then recite first Chamaka. Repeat chanting of Namaka second time along with second Anuvaka of Chamaka. In this way Namaka may be recited 11 times with 11th Anuvaka of Chamaka concluding. This is termed as One Rudra. 121 times Rudra chanting is called Rudraikadashani. When Rudra is repeated 1331 times, it is named as One Maharudra. 11 Maharudras will make one Atirudra (14641 times).

When 11 persons recite 11 times Rudra daily for a period of 11 days, then it becomes One Maharudra.

