

# कठोपनिषद् Kāthopanīṣad - Dvītiya vallī

Kāthopanīṣad

पुरमेकादशद्वारमजस्यावक्रचेतसः ।

अनुष्टाय न शोचति विमुक्तश्च विमुच्यते ॥ एतत् वै तत् ॥ १ ॥

puramekādaśadvāra majasyāvakracetasah ।

anuṣṭāya na śocati vimuktaśca vimucyate ॥ etat vai tat ॥ 1 ॥

Brahma tatva is not available for easy understanding—durvijñeyatvāt. It has to be stated again and again. As even a diet regimen is said again and again in order that it could be followed, Sruti restates the Brahma tatva in different forms of expressions in this particular section.

In the first place, Brahman is presented as purasvāmī who is independent of the pura. He is savatantraḥ; his satta does not depend upon the kāryakaraṇasaṅghātaḥ. This is said by first pointing out the city and the master in the city. The purasvāmī is independent of the pura.

The physical body is likened to a walled city which has got eleven gates with gate keepers. For every sense organ, there is an adhiṣṭāna devatā. There is a svāmī in the chambers in whose presence the whole place becomes active. The city is meant for the svāmī. The physical body is a saṁhati, a complex, and is meant for the svāmī, the jīva alone. We have altogether seven openings in the head, three openings in the trunk and the eleventh one is the subtle aperture called Brahm-randhra at the crown of the head, famous in the Yogasastra.

Ajasyāvakracetasah: The pura svāmī does not undergo any change. Like even the light of the sun—ādityaparakāsavat—the pura svāmī does not undergo any change. Sunlight is always the same. It appears to be very mild in the morning and in the evening, and during the day it appears to be very hot. This appearance is due to upādhi and not due to the sun.

The pura svāmī is one who is avakracetasah, meaning, whose consciousness is not subject to any kind of change. He is nitya śuddha prakāśasvarūpaḥ. He is unborn—ajah and eternal—nityaḥ.. Āpekṣika nityatvam is not meant here. His pāramārthika or kūṣastha nityatvam is pointed out.

Anuṣṭāya : Here anuṣṭāna means nidhidyāsanam or dhyānam which is preceded by samyak vijñānam—clear knowledge. Why should any one who has got knowledge of the ātmā do nidhidyāsanam or dhyānam? Where is the necessity for contemplation if one got the knowledge of Ātmā? Dhyānam is mānasam karma and cannot be a pramāṇa. Pramāṇa is that which produces knowledge. An action is not a pramāṇa. Action stems from will about things that are known to me. Means and ends are known by pramāṇa. One makes use of what is already known for achieving some ends. For that one follows a particular ‘means’—may be vaidikam or laukikam karma. It can be a ritual or a worldly action which again is known through pramāṇa only. Here, knowledge gained from the śāstrā should be converted into spiritual experience. Dhyānam is a karma, and being a karma, it will not produce knowledge. If it is saṅgā brahma dhyānam, it can produce all necessary conditions for gaining this knowledge. By this are we dismissing pūjā, kīrtanam etc.? No. They are all important and necessary and they are not dismissed.

Ātmajñānam is aparokṣa viṣaya and is self-evident. Though Ātmā is self-evident, there is a misapprehension. The pura, the city, meaning dehādisaṅghātaḥ is taken as the Swami. The physical body is an object of one’s observation; still it is mistaken for the Ātmā. Therefore, one has to take recourse to pramāṇa and gain sarvātmatvam.

By taking recourse to pramāṇa, the adhikārī gains sarvātmatvam and he never grieves— na śocati. It is because there is no second thing which could give fear and grief. He is free from eṣāṇā trayam—desire for security, desire for pleasure and desire for progeny. Freed from all these three, he never comes to grief— na śocati. Having gained by knowledge the state of fearlessness— abhayaprāpteḥ, there is no perception of fear and hence he cannot come to grief. There is nothing available to be afraid of. Satya ātmā cannot be afraid of mithyā ātmā as even the clay cannot be afraid of the pot. Mithyā cannot disturb the Satyam. Mithyā snake cannot disturb the rope. When the snake appearance goes, it will not leave any dharma on the rope. As there is no source for śoka—grief, he becomes vimuktaḥ—liberated, meaning there is no cause for acquiring a new physical body— punaḥ śariraṁ na grhṇāti.

हंसः शुचिषद् वसुरन्तरिक्षसद् होता वेदिषदतिथिर्दुरोणसत् ।

नृषद् वरसदृतसद् व्योमसदब्जा गोजा ऋतजा अद्रिजा ऋतं बृहत् ॥ २ ॥

haṁsaḥ śuciṣad vasurantarikṣasad hotā vediṣadatithirduroṇasat ।

nṛṣad varasadṛtasad vyomasadabjā gojā ṛtajā adrijā ṛtaṁ bṛhat ॥ 2 ॥

As Hamsa (Sun) He dwells in heaven; as Vayu (air) He dwells in the sky; as fire He dwells on the Earth; as guest He dwells in a house; He dwells in man, in the Gods, in the Sacrifice (truth) in the sky. He is born in the waters, He is born in the earth; He is born in the sacrifice; He is born on the mountains; He is true and great.

The Puruṣa who has been explained, in the last mantra, as residing in the human body is now explained in its wider aspect as the Lordly one who presides over all the functions in every form. The stanza gives us a very melodious list of living organisms and forms in the universe.

Haṁsaḥ : Lord Sun is called Haṁsaḥ. He removes darkness— andhakāraṁ tamaḥ hanti iti Haṁsaḥ.

Śuciṣad : One who has got a clear route— śucau divi ādityamātmanā sīdati gacchati iti । Śuciṣad

Vasurantarikṣasad : Vasu means the one who makes every being alive— vāsayati sarvān iti vasu —vāyvātmanāntarikṣe sīdati iti—He is the air in the atmosphere.

Hotā vediṣad: As fire He dwells on earth.

Atithirduroṇasat : He dwells in the house as a guest.

Nṛṣad : He abides in the form of human beings— nṛṣu manuṣyeṣu sīdati iti nṛṣat

Varasad : nṛṣu manuṣyeṣu sīdati iti nṛṣat vareṣu śreṣṭeṣu pūjyeṣu deveṣu sīdati iti varasat – He is a dweller among the adorable ones, the devas.

Ṛtasad : He is the one in the form of truth and obtaining in dharma—varasat dharme sīdati iti ṛta sat.

Vyomasad : He is the one who abides and moves in space— ākāśe sīdati iti vyomasat

Abjā : apsu sīdati iti abjā—He is in the form of all aquatics.

Gojā : gavi pṛthivyām - He is the one that is born on the earth like trees, plants etc.

Ṛtajā : karmaṇā sakāśāt jāyate iti ṛtajā – He is born in the sacrifice.

Adrijā : parvatebhyaḥ nadyādi rūpeṇa jāyate iti – Atma is anything born out of mountain like river etc.

Ṛtaṁ : He is unchanging in nature.

Bṛhat : He is limitless. Being the cause of everything, nothing is away from it.

The purport of this mantra is that the jagat has but one Self alone which is all-pervasive and that there is no plurality of selves.

ऊर्ध्वं प्राणमुन्नयत्यपानं प्रत्यगस्यति  
मध्ये वामनमासीनं विश्वे देवा उपासते ॥ ३ ॥  
ūrdhvaṁ prānamunnayatypānaṁ pratyagasyati  
madhye vāmanamāsīnaṁ viśve devā upāsate ॥ 3 ॥

3. He (Brahman) sends the Prana up and throws the Apana down. The Adorable One, seated in the Centre, all Devas worship.

Ūrdhvaṁ prānamunnayat: Prāṇa is prāk gamanavān vāyuh. It is the respiration that goes out . Pratyag Ātmā alone causes the exhalation from the lungs to go out— hṛdayāt ūrdhvam unnayati. Similarly, it is the Pratyag Ātmā that thrusts inward — pratyagasyati—the apāna, which is adho gamanavān.

It is pratyagātmā that makes the prāṇa function. It is the cause of respiration to and exhalation from the lungs.

Madhye āsīnaṁ vāmanam viśve devā upāsate: All the devas like eyes etc. offer worship to the Adorable One—vāmanam—abiding in the centre, meaning, in the space inside the lotus of the heart. The eyes offer all the forms and the colours unto the Pratyag Ātmā. The nose offers all forms of smell. All sense organs offer the respective sense objects unto the feet of the Pratyag Ātmā as even the subjects do to a king. The intention made clear in the Sruti is that Pratyag Ātmā, under whose direction all the activities of the sense organs and the prana exist, is proved to be different from all of them.

अस्य विस्त्रंसमानस्य शरीरस्थस्य देहिनः ।

देहाद् विमुच्यमानस्य किमत्र परिशिष्यते ॥ एतत् वै तत् ॥ ४ ॥

asya visraṁsamānasya śarīrasthasya dehinaḥ ।

dehād vimucyamānasya kimatra pariśiṣyate ॥ etat vai tat ॥ 4 ॥

When this Atman, who dwells in the body, departs from the body, what remains then? This verily is That.

The Atman, upon whom all the Indriyas depend and who is the controller and director of all the vital airs, is the king of this City of Eleven Gates, our body. Just as when the beloved king leaves the capital permanently to stay in a different chosen capital, all the courtiers and the subject follow the king into the new capital, so too, when the Atman departs from a body, all the activities of that physical body seemingly depart with the Atman.

When once the Lord quits the body, however great the man might have been, while living, his body starts to decay and perish until ultimately it reaches the dust from which the materials of the body had come.

Kimatra Parisishyathe (what remains then?): When the Atman has departed from the body what remains in the body? With this question Sruti confronts us with the sacred Truth that there remains practically nothing upon which we may come to glorify that empty shell, the dead body !!