

December 2021 Retreat at Anaikatti Ashram Chāndogya upaniṣad - by Swami Sadatmananda Sarasawati

From Dec 26, 2021 to Jan 1, 2022 a spiritual camp was conducted at AVG, Anaikatti. In spite of pandemic conditions, around 100 students participated. Swami Sakshatkrtanandaji taught the essence Brhadaranyaka Upanishad and Swami Sadatamanandaji taught the essence of Chandogya Upanishad

INTRODUCTION: Chandogya Upanishad means the one which belongs to Sama Veda. It has 8 chapters and 627 mantras. The first five chapters are dealing with Upasanas. The first three chapters are talking about upasanas connected with rituals. The next two chapters are upasanas to be done independently. The upasanas are interspersed with interesting relevant stories. The last three chapters of this Upanishad are dealing with Brahma vidya. Now-a-days Vedic saguna upasanas have been replaced by puranic saguna upasanas.

SANTI PATHA: May I have a healthy sthula sariram and suksma sariram. May I not negate Brahman. May Brahman not reject me. May I gain the qualifications to study the Upanishad.

CHAPTER 1:

Udgita is introduced and paramatma is meditated on. May one meditate on Om, which is Udgitha for the upasana on Hiranyagarba. When karma is done with understanding of the Sastra and with commitment along with upasana, it becomes more powerful. This is indicated with a story. When devas and asuras fought, devas meditated on prana as Udgitha. Devas became powerful and defeated the asuras. One may meditate on Udgitha as aditya purusha (Purusha in the Sun). One may meditate on udgitha as akshi purusha (Purusha in the Right eye). The form of akshi purusha is the same as aditya purusha.

In Kurudesha, Usasti, a great scholar in Sama Veda lived. That place was devastated by famine. Usasti asked for food from an elephant owner, who was eating black grams. That person had only that food he was eating. He gave that and Usasti ate that. He took the balance food to his house. Next day he ate that balance food and went to the King who was performing ayaga. He sat near the performers of the yaga. He told them if they chant without knowing the devata associated with that chant, their head will fall. King came and told that they were searching for Usasti and as they did not find him, they appointed other priests. Usasti taught the devata and the correct chants. Then the yaga was successfully performed.

CHAPTER 2

Upasana on complete Sama is excellent. Whatever is good is indeed sama. All good things

will come to that person and serve him. Various types of upasana on Sama are done for gaining higher lokas. Prana upasana is talked about here. There is an interesting story on why prana is the greatest.

When Prajapati meditated on three lokas, knowledge of three Vedas occurred to him. From three Vedas, three letters bhuh, bhuvah and svah occurred to him. After meditation of three vyahrtis, he got Omkara. As all leaves are pervaded by mid-ribs, all words are pervaded by Om.

CHAPTER 3 :

Madhu upasana, Gayatri upasana, Dvarapala upasana, jyotirupa Brahma upasana and sandilyaupasana are done for different benefits.

One of the most beautiful Sentence which we hear in Vedanta comes here - ***sarvamkalvidam brahma tajjalan shantah san upasita.*** Tajjallan means all that is here is Brahman. Tajja means everything is born of Brahman. Talla means everything is resolved back to Brahman. Tadana means everything is sustained by Brahman. This is called Sandilya vidya seen by Sandilya rishi. One should entertain with conviction that everything is Brahman. It decides this life and next life.

In one more upasana Cosmic Lord is meditated on as an inexhaustible treasure house of wealth. Result of this upasana is that the son of the person will have long life and the upasaka will not cry for the death or illness of the son

In another upasana, the whole life of a person is seen as an yagna. The upasana here is for one's own long life and prosperity. Life and all activities of life are seen as different parts of the ritual. Sastra says whole life consisting of different activities is worship. This upasana provides the basis for karma yoga. Looking at the whole life as an attitude of worship to Isvara. Life is divided into 3 stages and each stage is part of a ritual – The first 24 years are visualized as morning activity of the ritual. The next 44 years ie, upto 68th year are visualized as the afternoon activity of the ritual. The next 48 years ie, upto 116th year visualized as evening activity of the ritual. Life span was not seen as 100 years but 116 years.

Last topic in this chapter is pratika upasana of two types – *adhyatmika* and *adhidaivika*. At the individual level mind may be meditated as Brahman. At the total level akasha may be meditated as Brahman. Mind and akasa are subtle, so they are symbols for Brahman.

CHAPTER 4 :

In this chapter 4 topics are mainly discussed. First topic is samvarga upasana . Second topic is catuspat brahma upasana and the third is upakosala vidya where different upasanas are talked about and the fourth topic is yagna shuddhi karma. There are some interesting stories related to each of these upasanas.

Janasruta distributed food and earned lot of punyam. Two swans were talking among themselves that Raikva earned punyam of good deeds done by all. Janasruti went to Raikva with 600 cows and other gift and asked him to teach the secret of his punyam. Raikva refused. Then Janasruti took more gifts to Raikva. Raikva imparted the teaching of samsarga upasana.

Jabala respectfully approached the Guru Gautama and asked to teach him. The Guru gave him 400 cows and asked to take care of them. Jabala decided that he will not return to the gurukulam until the cows became 1000. After the cows became 1000, one bull gave upadesa to Jabala about Brahman having four padas. Jabala returned to the Gurukulam. The Guru asked him, you look like a knower of Brahman, who taught you. Jabala said that other than humans taught him, but we wanted to learn from him. The Guru taught him the same vidya.

Upakosala stayed in the gurukulam of Satyakama Jabala. He served Jabala's fire for 12 years. The teacher graduated other students except Upakosala. The teacher went out. Upakosala fasted. The three fires totally taught 5 upasanas to Upakosala. The teacher returned to the gurukulam. He asked Upakosala, you look like one with self knowledge, who taught you. Upakosala indicated that fires taught him and also told what the fires taught him. Jabala was happy and he taught the benefit of self knowledge.

CHAPTER 5:

Pranavidya is explained. One who meditates on prana as excellent becomes excellent.

Pancaagni vidya is explained. 5 stages of descent of a jiva are explained. They are heaven, clouds, earth, father's body and mother's body.

Vaisvanaravidya is explained. Vaisvanara is the Lord with Cosmic body.

With this the upasana topic is over.

CHAPTER 6 (Sad vidya)- The topic of brahma vidya starts from this chapter till the end.

This chapter has 16 sections and 69 mantras. Tat TvamAsimahavakya appears in this section. Brahman is revealed as Sat in this chapter. It is in the form of dialogue between father Aruni and his son Svetaketu.

Svataketu went to the gurukulam and studied upto the age of 24 and returned home. He was arrogant due to his learning. His father Aruni asked him whether he asked for the teaching, knowing which everything is as well known. Svetaketu asked his father to teach that.

Aruni told that knowing one clay all clay products are known, knowing one gold all products of gold are known and knowing one iron all products of iron are known. By knowing one cause all effect are as well known.

Before creation, there was only existence (Brahman). It was one without a second. Brahman created three elements fire, water and earth. By trivid karanam, the three elements became the manifest world. Sruti has no commitment to talk about creation. The purpose of talking of creation is to show that all that is here is Brahman.

Mind is made of food, prana is made of water and speech is made of fire. Svetaketu said that he is not able to understand how mind is made of food. Aruni told him not to eat for 15 days but he can drink water. On the 16th day Aruni asked him to chant Vedas. Svetaketu replied that he did not remember. Aruni asked him to eat. Now Svetaketu remembered the Vedas. He understood that mind is made of food.

You should go from effect to the cause. The body resolves in food, food resolves in water, water resolves in fire and fire resolves in Brahman. Speech is resolved in mind, mind is resolved in prana, prana is resolved in fire and fire is resolved in Brahman. In dream one resolves in Brahman. Everything is born of Brahman, sustained by Brahman and resolves in Brahman.

Tat Tvam Asi. You are that Brahman. This statement was told 9 times with different examples.

A person from Gandhara desa was caught by the thieves, blind folded and left in a solitary place. He shouted in all directions. One compassionate person removed the blind fold and told him the direction of Gandharadesa. Travelling from village to village and enquiring the way, he reached Gandhara desa. Similarly a jiva is blind folded by moha and suffers. Guru shows him the way to moksha.

CHAPTER 7 (Bhooma vidya)

There are 26 sections and 51 mantras in this chapter. Bhooma means Brahman or limitless which is sukha svarupam. Brahman is revealed as ananda in this chapter.

Narada approached Sanat kumara and asked him to teach. Sanat kumara asked Narada to tell him all that he already knew. Narada told that he had studied Vedas, vedangas, logic, grammar, fine arts, astronomy and many other subjects. Narada said I know all this, but I have sorrow and I have heard that knower of self does not have sorrow. That I do not know. He asked Sanat kumara to teach that knowledge which will help him overcome sorrow. Sanat kumara informed the 15 alambanas to meditate on Brahman. They are name, word, mind, sankalpa, chittam, dhyanam, vighnam, bhalam, annam, water, fire, akasa, smaranam, hope and prana. In this order, the latter one is greater than the former.

Sanat kumara told that one should desire for limitless happiness, have fitness for the knowledge, have commitment to serve the Guru and have sraddha in the Guru and Sashtra. I as Brahman alone is in the front, back, side, above and everywhere. The wise per-

son does not see death, disease, sadness in oneself and sees everything as himself. He has no limitation for anything in any manner. He remains as one, but becomes three, five, one hundred and one thousand. He has sarva-atma-bhaava. Narada overcame his sorrow. Sanat kumara is also called Skanda .

CHAPTER 8 (Prajapati vidya)

There are 15 sections and 61 mantras in this chapter. Brahman is revealed as Chit in this chapter.

Dahara Vidya: Dahara means small. One should meditate on Paramatma as obtaining in a small space in the lotus-like heart. It is the supporter of everything. It is free from desires, death, sorrow, hunger and thirst. Like a king, Parmatma maintains law and order in the universe.

Brahma Vidya: Prajapati announced that one who knows Brahman attains all lokas and all his desires are fulfilled. Indra and Virocana approached Prajapati and asked for the knowledge. Prajapati asked them to stay with him for 32 years observing brahmacharya. After 32 years he told the purusha obtaining in the eye, seen in the water and mirror is Brahman. They went away. Indra had a doubt that the body which is mortal cannot be Brahman. Prajapati asked him to stay for another 32 years. After 32 years he told that the purusha in the dream is Brahman. Indra returned again. Prajapati asked him to stay for 32 years. After 32 years he told. Purusha in sleep is Brahman. Indra again returned. Prajapati asked him to stay for another 5 years. After 5 years he told Atma is in and through all bodies. You are that atma, Sakshi, ultimate reality, turiyam or utama purusha. He who knows the atma attains all the lokas and has all desires fulfilled.

Any karma phala acquired is exhausted here and also in the other lokas. One should do seva to the Guru, and in the free time study the scriptures. After that he should return home perform duties as a householder. He should make people live a dharmic life. He should master his sense organs. He should not hurt living beings and remain as such for the entire life. He will attain Brahma loka. He does not come back.

So Chandogya Upanishad teaches means for preparation for self-knowledge and gives the knowledge of the self which is the final means for freedom.

Write-up by N. Avinashilingam.