

Kaivalyopaniṣad
Swami Viditatmananda Saraswati's transcribed talk

This is the thirteenth part of the serial article, continuation from May 2022 newsletter.

Now the teacher says that *sannyāsa* or renunciation is also required for the knowledge of *brahman*.

न कर्मणा न प्रजया धनेन
त्यागेनैके अमृतत्वमानशुः ।
परेण नाकं निहितं गुहायां
विभ्राजते यद्यतयो विशन्ति ॥ ३ ॥

*na karmaṇā na prajayā dhanena
tyāgenaike amṛtatoamānaśuḥ
pareṇa nākaṁ nihitaṁ guhāyāṁ
vibhrājate yadyatayo viśanti*

न कर्मणा - not by deeds ; न प्रजया - nor by progeny ; (न) धनेन - (nor) by wealth ;
त्यागेन - (only) by renunciation ; एके - some ; अमृतत्वम् - immortality ; आनशुः -
attained ; परेण - higher than ; नाकम् - heaven ; निहितम् - situated ; गुहायाम् - in
the cave (of the
heart) ; विभ्राजते - shines ; यत् - which ; यतयः - the renunciates ; विशन्ति - enter
(attain) ;

Not by deeds, nor by progeny or wealth, but by renunciation alone have some people attained immortality. The renunciates attain that which is higher than the heavens, and which shines in the cave of the heart (the intellect). (3)

As you may know, this *mantra* and the one that follows are both chanted when a *sannyāsī* enters a home; he is received with a *pūrṇa-kumbha*, a pot filled with water, with a coconut on top of it, placed with leaves on a plate of raw rice, and so on. The water is supposed to be for washing the feet, because, in the olden days, people walked a long distance when they came to your home. The *pūrṇa-kumbha* also symbolizes *pūrṇatvam*, the completeness of the *sannyāsī*, as well as our own devotion to him. But why is this particular *mantra* chanted on the *sannyāsī*'s entry? It is because it has the words *yatayaḥ viśanti*, the renunciates enter. *Yati* means *sannyāsī*,

a renunciate. This *mantra* is chanted because a renunciate is entering the home.

The three-fold basis of all human pursuits

Sat-cit-ānanda: We cannot accept the fact of death because we think that death will bring an end to our existence. This resistance to or dislike for death is indeed the dislike of the nonexistence of oneself, which shows a love for existence. If we knew that death brings an end to this body alone and not the self, perhaps then we might not have that much difficulty in accepting it. However, death is equated to the nonexistence of the self, so the dislike for death is natural; existence is our nature, immortality is our nature.

The myriad pursuits of life can be reduced to three. One is the pursuit of pushing death as far away as possible. This is why we work out in the gym, jog for long hours, do *yoga-āsanas*, *prāṇāyāma*, and so on, even as we count calories, proteins, vitamins, weight, and cholesterol all the time. All this has to do with prolonging existence. Naturally, we do not want death, disease or pain. A large part of our lives is dedicated to avoiding death. We also want our pictures taken at every possible opportunity; we know the body will not last long and the idea is that at least the pictures will provide a substitute for it.

Another thing that we do not like is ignorance. We cannot stand ignorance. We cannot stand being stupid. We love being wise, and, therefore, love knowledge, never ignorance. We spend an enormous amount of time gathering knowledge, being informed. The reason why this entire Internet phenomenon is thriving is that people want to know what is happening everywhere in the world. People want to know what is happening in the field of physics, in the world of chemistry. They watch the Discovery channel to know things of their interest.

The third universal human pursuit is the love for being happy. Not only do we want to live, but we want to live happily. Not only do we want to live happily, but we want to be conscious of living happily. When I am told, "Swamiji, I will give you an injection that will put you in a coma, and then you will live and live happily," I say, "No." I want to live, but I want to live happily and live consciously. To live is *sat* or existence; to live happily indicates *ānanda*, and to live so

consciously indicates *cit* or knowledge. *Sat-cit-ānanda* is what we love naturally and we resist anything opposed to that because *sat-cit-ānanda* is our very nature.

Sat-cit-ānanda, the fact of existence, awareness, and happiness, fullness or wholeness alone is called immortality here. The *amṛtatvam* mentioned in this verse stands for all three— freedom from mortality, freedom from sorrow, and freedom from ignorance.

This freedom from death, sorrow, ignorance is what some wise people have attained. The question now is, “Am I interested in immortality? So what if some wise people have attained immortality?”

Attaining immortality is very relevant and important to us because this is what we are seeking in life. It is, in fact, the desire behind every other desire. The desire to become free from death, ignorance, and sorrow is *the* desire. If you examine whatever specific thing you want, such as listening to music, watching nature etc., you will surely find that one of these three desires is involved; you are doing something to avoid or push away death, doing something to push away ignorance, or doing something to push away sorrow. At any moment, one of these three desires is present in your heart behind every action that you perform. The prayer in every heart is *asato mā sadgamaya, tamaso mā jyotirgamaya, mṛtyormā amṛtaṁ gamaya*, Oh Lord, please lead me to the truth from the untruth, to light from darkness, to immortality from death, from the Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad¹.

Immortality is most important to us; nothing else comes even close. If we have *sat-cit-ānanda* and nothing else, that is enough. If everything else is available but not this, such a life does not serve any purpose at all. If this becomes clear, there will arise dispassion for everything else; nothing can add anything or take away anything from us. We are comfortable with things as they are and where they are. We do not have to acquire them, own them or make them ours.

Have you noticed how we enjoy nature, without any attachment or aversion, without the need to own it? We can enjoy the trees where they are; they do not

¹ Br.Up. 1.3.28

have to be our trees. But we do not have this attitude with everything. We do not really enjoy a house in this manner; it holds no interest unless it is owned by us. The car has to be owned by us. Some status must be owned by us, and then alone can we enjoy it. However, when we have the knowledge, we recognize that we are sufficient as we are; we are immortal as we are. All that is necessary for us to be happy is for us to just be. That is all that is required. It does not matter *where* one is. Vedānta teaches that the awareness of being as in “I am” is sufficient.

The significance of *tyāga*, renunciation

In the recognition that immortality, *sat-cit-ānanda*, is all we want, naturally, whatever makes us immortal becomes important. We recognize that mortality is the product of ignorance and not a reality. So “to become immortal” means to remove the ignorance that creates the notion or complex of mortality. That is how the knowledge becomes important. Then the means of knowledge, *śravaṇa*, *manana*, and *nididhyāsana* become important. When the mind is free from every other pre-occupation, it becomes available for *śravaṇa* etc. Giving up all the preoccupations is called *tyāga*, renunciation. Renunciation is the letting go or the dropping off or the giving up of everything other than the self. That is the result of the recognition of what it is that we truly want.

The wise, who have *viveka* or discrimination, recognize what they want in life. By the use of the word *tyāgena*, through renunciation, this verse tells us that their priorities are very clear to them. They recognize that there is no need to achieve the various ends, such as wealth, fame, name, prosperity, heaven, or anything else, because gaining them can neither add anything to the self nor take anything away from it. Therefore, the wise leave these ends where they are and also drop their pursuits of achieving these external ‘band-aids.’ It is like a person who is able to walk well not needing to hang on to crutches. Therefore, the wise give up all *karma*. *Karma* here means actions that are the means for achieving those ends that no longer have any meaning.

To be continued...