

**Kaivalyopaniṣad**  
**Swami Veditatmananda Saraswati's transcribed talk**

*This is the fourth part of the serial article, continuation from August 2021 newsletter.*

**The seeking of human beings is endless**

On the first day of the course, Pūjya Swamiji pointed out that every human being has desires, so everyone is constantly doing something. Every action is a result of some desire, and the desires keep on arising in the mind, one after the other. Then we were told that there are two kinds of desires: natural desires and cultivated desires. For instance, hunger and thirst are natural desires, but the desire to eat only certain gourmet foods or the desire to drink only coca-cola to quench thirst are cultivated desires. As far as natural desires are concerned, there is always a solution for them, but in the case of cultivated desires, there may or may not be a solution. On the second day, Swamiji went over the reasons behind every desire. It became clear that the one desire behind all other desires is the longing to become free from desire itself, because every desire is an indication of a sense of lack or want.

Basically, all one wants is to become free of every lack, or free from every want. We want to become free from every manner of limitation. For example, a person with an injured leg may need the help of a cumbersome set of crutches to walk. After a while, he may feel happier in having a lighter set of crutches, but he still remains dependent upon them. His real desire is to not be limited by needing to use crutches at all. Similarly, all of us want to become limitless.

All right, then, what's the answer? What should we do? To become limitless, what actions must we perform? Every action being limited, whatever can be achieved as a result of action is bound to be limited. Therefore, however many such gains may be, the limited individual will continue to remain limited. This is how the second day's lecture ended. This got me thinking. On the one hand one wants to be limitless, and, on the other hand, nothing can make anyone truly limitless. There was great anxiety in my mind. The desire for being limitless is natural, and,

therefore, must have a solution, but where is the solution? There didn't seem to be any solution. Then, on the third day, we were told the story of the tenth man<sup>1</sup>. When I understood the story, where the tenth man was told, "You are the very tenth man that you are seeking," I realized that I already was that which I was seeking to be. It was a real eye-opener. That was a great miracle!

When one discerns this secret, one gains great comfort. As Pūjya Swamiji says, psychology cannot solve the human problem, and Vedānta does not accept the existence of the problem. This problem of sorrow cannot be solved by means other than seeing the sorrow to be a product of our own wrong notions. Regardless of whatever else we do to deal it, we can only get some kind of relief for a while, because the sorrow eventually returns. It is like the poor water buffalo that is bothered by the flies buzzing around its head all the time. The buffalo dips its head into the water to shake them off. The flies then go away and the buffalo gets some relief. But as soon as it raises its head out of the water, the flies reappear and begin to stick to its head again. Similarly, as soon as we come out of our short-termed relief, sorrow takes hold of us again.

### **We are the problem; we alone are the solution**

All that is to be done to address pain and sorrow is to discover that we are what we are seeking to be. All sorrow is the result of our perceptions of ourselves as being limited. There is no other cause for sorrow; no one else or nothing else in the

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<sup>1</sup> Once ten young boys set off for a picnic. On their way they came across a river. All the boys swam across the river and reached the other bank. To make sure whether all the boys had reached safely, the leader started counting them all : one, two, three.... nine ! He counted again. Another boy also counted. Every time the count went upto nine only. So the boys concluded that the tenth boy was lost. They searched for the lost tenth boy for the whole day and not finding him, the boys started weeping. One old man passing by that place saw the boys weeping, asked them the reason for their weeping and realizing the situation the old man consoled the boys saying "Stop weeping, boys. The tenth boy is not lost. He is." "Really ? Where is he ?" The old man made the leader count the boys again, and as the leader completed counting the number nine, the old man told him, "You are the tenth boy that you are seeking." And the boy realized "I am the tenth boy I am seeking."

world can cause sorrow. Nothing else causes sorrow except our perceptions of being limited or lacking or wanting. Whenever we find ourselves lacking or wanting, we become sad, we become unhappy. Because there is no cause for sorrow in the world, it stands to reason that there is also no cause of happiness in the world. Of course, we can always label certain things and believe that they are the causes of happiness or sorrow. However, the one truth is that the only cause of happiness is finding oneself acceptable and the only cause of sorrow is finding oneself unacceptable.

Self-non-acceptance is the cause of all sorrow; self-acceptance alone offers happiness. It is neither the enjoyment or lack of material and physical comforts nor any of the opposites of heat and cold, comfort and discomfort, honor and dishonor, or success and failure that can be said to be the cause of sorrow or happiness. Instead, it is when things somehow make us feel limited that, in triggering the sense of limitation, they become the cause of sorrow. If they cannot trigger that sense, they are rendered ineffective. If the many 'buttons' of self-non-acceptance are disconnected, it doesn't matter which ones are pushed because there would be no live buttons to push. In the description of the wise person, that is how he is said to be free from the impact of everything around him. The Gita<sup>2</sup> says that such a one as he is *vītarāgabhayakrodhaḥ*, free of *rāga*, longing, *bhaya*, fear, and *krodha*, anger. The impulses of attachment, aversion, fear, and anger only arise on account of us finding ourselves limited. A wise person has discovered himself to be free from every limitation. Therefore, *duḥkheṣu*, in situations that are generally supposed to cause unhappiness or pain, *anudvīgnamanāḥ*, he is not perturbed at all. It is not be

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<sup>2</sup> दुःखेष्वनुद्विग्नमनाः सुखेषु विगतस्पृहः ।

वीतरागभयक्रोधः स्थितधीर्मुनिरुच्यते ॥

*duḥkheṣvanudvīgnamanāḥ sukheṣu vigataspr̥haḥ*  
*vītarāgabhayakrodhaḥ sthitadhīrmunirucyate*

The one who is not affected by adversities, who is without yearning for pleasures, and is free from longing, fear, and anger is said to be a wise person whose knowledge is firm. (B.G. 2-56)

cause he is insensitive, but because all his 'buttons' are inactive and thus external situations cannot provoke him anymore.

### The wise person enjoys equanimity of mind

Lord Kṛṣṇa describes a wise person as being *samaduḥkhasukhaḥ*<sup>3</sup>, one who takes both *sukha* and *duḥkha* (pleasure and pain) in his stride. How is it possible to do so? *Svasthaḥ*, it is because he abides in the truth of himself as a free person; *mānāpamānayostulyaḥ*, because he maintains composure of mind in both *māna*, honor, and *apamāna*, dishonor, and, *tulyomitṛāripakṣayoḥ*, whether he is confronting friend or foe. *Tulyanindātmasaṁstutiḥ*, both censure and praise are the same to him, because nothing affects him or touches him. The self is never affected by any of these situations or conditions. Therefore, this knowledge removes all the sorrow and enables us to own up our true nature, which is limitlessness and happiness. That is called *mokṣa*, the cessation of all sorrow and true attainment of unsurpassed happiness.

The purpose of the teaching of the Upaniṣad is to remove all our erroneous notions or complexes about ourselves and reveal the true nature of the self. These notions start dropping off as we are exposed to more and more of the teachings.

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<sup>3</sup> समदुःखसुखः स्वस्थः समलोष्टाश्मकाञ्चनः ।

तुल्यप्रियाप्रियो धीरस्तुल्यनिन्दात्मसंस्तुतिः ॥

*samaduḥkhasukhaḥ svasthaḥ samaloṣṭāśmakāñcanaḥ*

*tulyapriyāpriyo dhīrastulyanindātmasaṁstutiḥ*

Alike in pleasure and pain, self-abiding, regarding a clod of earth, a stone and gold as of equal worth, the same toward agreeable and disagreeable objects, calm, and indifferent to praise and blame; (BG 14.24)

मानापमानयोस्तुल्यस्तुल्यो मित्रारिपक्षयोः ।

सर्वारम्भपरित्यागी गुणातीतः स उच्यते ॥

*mānāpamānayostulyastulyo mitṛāripakṣayoḥ*

*sarvārambhaparitāgī guṇātītaḥ sa ucyate*

The same in honor and dishonor, the same toward friend and foe, habitually renouncing all actions—such a person is said to have transcended the *guṇas*. (BG 14.25)

That is how the bondage becomes loosened. Ultimately, when all the notions are destroyed, the bondage is also completely destroyed and we know the true nature of the self to be limitless.

The word *upaniṣad* primarily means self-knowledge, but the text expounding this knowledge is also called an *upaniṣad* in a secondary sense. The Kaivalya Upaniṣad is called an Upaniṣad in that sense.

### **Kaivalyopaniṣad**

The Kaivalyopaniṣad occurs in the Atharva Veda. All the Upaniṣads are part of the Vedas. Sometimes, people think that Vedānta is separate from the Vedas, but that is not so; it is just as one's head is included in one's body and so it is not necessary to say both "my body" and "my head." As we have seen earlier, Vedānta can be taken to be either the physical final section of the Vedas or the culmination of the knowledge of the Vedas.

There are four Vedas—the Ṛg Veda, the Yajur Veda, the Sāma Veda, and the Atharva Veda—and each Veda contains several Upaniṣads. It is traditionally accepted that there are 108 Upaniṣads. Of these, ten are popularly called the major Upaniṣads. They are Īśa, Kena, Kaṭha, Praśna, Muṇḍaka, Māṇḍūkya, Taittirīya, Aitareya, Chāndogya, and Bṛhadāraṇyaka. The reason they are called the major Upaniṣads is that Ādi Śaṅkarācārya, a revered teacher in the Vedāntic lineage of teachers, has written extensive *bhāṣyas* or commentaries on them. Subsequently, other *ācāryas* have also written commentaries on these Upaniṣads. The Kaivalyopaniṣad is not one of these ten, but it is also a very beautiful text. Even though we don't have Śaṅkarācārya's commentary on it, we do have the commentary of another teacher, Śaṅkarānanda, who was the *guru* of Swami Vidyāraṇya <sup>4</sup>.

The Ṛg Veda contains the Aitareyopaniṣad. The Yajur Veda has two major rescensions or branches, called the Śukla Yajur Veda or White Yajur Veda, and the Kṛṣṇa

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<sup>4</sup>Swami Vidyāraṇya is the author of the famous text, Pañcadaśī.

Yajur Veda or Black Yajur Veda. The Īśāvāsyā and Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣads are found in the Śukla Yajur Veda, and the Kaṭhōpaniṣad and Taittirīyopaniṣad are found in the Kṛṣṇa Yajur Veda. The Sāma Veda includes the Kenopaniṣad and the Chāndogyaopaniṣad. The Atharva Veda has the Kaivalyopaniṣad, the Praśnopaniṣad, the Muṇḍakopaniṣad, and the Māṇḍūkyopaniṣad.

The Kaivalyopaniṣad is a short Upaniṣad, consisting of only 24 *mantras*, but it is very beautiful and well suited for contemplation. It is prescribed that aspirants should memorize this Upaniṣad and recite it everyday. When we discuss the last *mantra* of this Upaniṣad we shall see how the recitation itself is healing and purifying.

### **Śāntipāṭha, the prayer of the Atharva Veda**

There is a *śāntipāṭha* or prayer that is specific to each of the Vedas, and that prayer is chanted before the study of any Upaniṣad of that particular Veda. The prayer that is associated with the Atharva Veda, which therefore applies to the Kaivalyopaniṣad, is as follows :

ॐ भद्रं कर्णेभिः शृणुयाम देवाः । भद्रं पश्येमाक्षभिर्यजत्राः ।  
स्थिरैरङ्गैस्तुष्टुवाँसस्तनूभिः । व्यशेम देवहितं यदायुः ।  
स्वस्ति न इन्द्रो वृद्धश्रवाः । स्वस्ति नः पूषा विश्ववेदाः ।  
स्वस्ति नस्तार्क्ष्यो अरिष्टनेमिः । स्वस्ति नो बृहस्पतिर्दधातु ।  
ॐ शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः ।

om bhadraṁ karṇebhiḥ śṛṇuyāma devāḥ  
bhadraṁ paśyemākṣabhiryajatrāḥ  
sthirairāṅgaistuṣṭuvāṁsastanūbhiḥ  
vyaśema devahitaṁ yadāyuh  
svasti na indro vṛddhaśravāḥ  
svasti naḥ pūṣā viśvavedāḥ  
svasti nastārṁkṣyo ariṣṭanemiḥ  
svasti no bṛhaspatirdadhātu  
om śāntiḥ śāntiḥ śāntiḥ

Om! Oh gods (shining ones), with our ears<sup>5</sup> may we hear what is auspicious. Oh gods (fit to be worshipped), with our eyes may we see what is auspicious. With firm limbs may we complete the full span of life allotted to us in service to gods and offering praise. May Indra, of great fame, be favorable to us. May the all-knowing Pūṣan (Lord Surya) be favorable to us. May Tārksya be favorable to us. May Bṛhaspati bestow all auspiciousness upon us. Om, Peace! Peace! Peace!

### **Both teacher and student invoke īśvara's grace**

This is a prayer for the well-being of everybody. It is traditionally chanted both by the teacher and the students and, therefore, all the verbs are in the plural. It is a prayer to *īśvara* in the form of various gods. In any prayer, there is recognition of the need for grace or blessing. We recognize that we are limited in many ways and that there are many things that are not within our control. This prayer is recited so that during the period of study or interaction between the teacher and student, the teacher is able to communicate the teaching effectively and the student is able to understand the intent with which it is conveyed and in the right manner. The teacher conveys a vision through the use of words and the students must therefore be attuned to the teacher's intent. Sometimes, the teacher may have to go beyond the derivative or commonly known meaning of words to convey the vision. In Vedānta, therefore, there is a distinction between the *vācyārtha* or literal meaning of words and the *lakṣyārtha* or implied meaning of the words. When the *vācyārtha* or literal meaning is not able to convey the intent of the teacher, there is a need to resort to the *lakṣyārtha* or implied meaning. However, what is most important is the *tātparya* or intended meaning, which the teacher wants to convey.

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<sup>5</sup>Normally by the rules of grammar, the third person plural of *karṇam*, ear, would be *karṇaiḥ*, but here the Veda uses *karṇebhiḥ*; this is *chāndasa-prayoga*, or Vedic usage.



<sup>6</sup>In whichever instance the commonly known meaning of words is not adequate, the scriptures resort to conveying an implied meaning.

### **The three sources of disturbance**

If we analyze the factors that cause disturbance in our minds, based on the sources from which they arise, they can be classified into three categories: the *ādhyātmika*, the *ādhibhautika*, and the *ādhidaiivika*. The *ādhyātmika* are factors that relate to one's own self, meaning that our own bodies and minds can disturb our frame of mind and come in the way of our understanding. The *ādhibhautika* are factors that relate to our environment in the form of the things and beings around us, including other people and animals, which can also come in the way of our serenity of mind. The *ādhidaiivika* are factors that relate to the cosmic forces, such as floods, earthquakes, hurricanes, and so on. Thus, to enjoy peace or serenity of mind, we require the combined grace of our own selves, of the environment, and of the cosmic forces.

### **The student must be attuned to the teacher's words**

The student must be attuned to the teacher so that he can appreciate the intent of the teacher's words. Even in the case of the Upaniṣad, since the teaching is in the

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<sup>6</sup>Naiyāyikas, (logicians) say that words themselves convey the meaning. A Vedāntin says the meaning is not just contained within the words, but rather in the intent of the speaker who uses words. For instance, sometimes, a word can have more than one meaning. For example, the statement *saindhavam ānaya*, means please bring *saindhava*. Now *saindhava* means that which is born or produced in Sindhu. Sindhu again means the sea or it also refers to the country around the river Sindhu (Indus). In the first case, *saindhava* would mean salt produced in the ocean. In the second case, *saindhava* would mean a horse bred in the territory called Sindhu. So in the sentence "*saindhavam ānaya*" the context determines whether it means "Please bring salt" or "Please bring a horse." If a person uses this sentence while eating his meal, *saindhava* would mean salt. If a person ready to travel long distance utters this sentence, the word would mean horse. From this example it is clear that the word *saindhava* doesn't determine what the meaning is; it is the one who uses the word that determines what the meaning is.



form of the spoken word, the *tātparyā-niṣcaya* or ascertainment of intended meaning becomes important. When communication takes place in the form of the spoken word, the right environment, in terms of the proper frame of mind of both teacher and student, should prevail.

Understanding the Upaniṣad is not simple and the knowledge it gives is valuable and very rare. Therefore, we begin the study with a prayer. Oh gods, please bless us, so that we may hear what is auspicious through our ears. In the present context, it means, please bless us so that we are able to listen to the statements of the Upaniṣads, the nature of the self, the nature of *brahman*, or the nature of the truth.

*Yajatrāḥ*<sup>7</sup> is another word for *devatās*. Oh gods, please bless us so that we may see the auspicious with our eyes. What is auspicious? *Īśvara* is auspicious, and, as Vedānta teaches us, the whole universe is a manifestation of *īśvara*. We pray that with our eyes we may see *īśvara* everywhere. That *īśvara* alone pervades everything is a reality, but on account of our own likes and dislikes, our ignorance, our ego, and our sense of 'I' and 'mine' that causes all these likes and dislikes, we do not see what really is. Instead, we see things through the 'colored glasses' of our likes and dislikes. The prayer thus is, Oh gods, please bless us so that our minds become objective and we may perceive auspiciousness in whatever we see and hear auspiciousness in whatever we hear.

*Sthiraiḥ aṅgaiḥ* means with healthy limbs. With firm and healthy limbs of the body, *vyāsema yad devahitam āyuh*, may we enjoy the full span of life allotted to us by the Lord. May our actions be performed in the spirit of service or devotion or offering to *īśvara*. *Tuṣṭuvāṁsaḥ* is derived from the root *stu* in the sense of 'to praise,' so *tuṣṭuvāṁsaḥ* means praising or glorifying. *Tanūbhiḥ* means through the Vedas or through words. In glorifying or praising the Lord with our words and serving the Lord with our limbs, may we spend our days as granted by the Lord

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<sup>7</sup> *Yajñaiḥ trāyante iti yajatrāḥ*, those who protect us by our performance of the *yajña*, or Vedic rituals, are called *yajatrāḥ*.

With our ears may we hear what is auspicious. With our eyes may we see what is auspicious. With our limbs, hands and legs, may we do what is auspicious. In our speech may we speak what is auspicious. Here the eyes and ears include all the organs of perception; what one experiences through the five organs of perception are sound, touch, form, taste, and smell. Oh gods, may we recognize the presence of *īśvara* through all the experiences at the level of the sense organs. With our organs of perception may we perceive *īśvara* and with our organs of action may we serve *īśvara*. May all our activities in life be centered upon *īśvara*.

When we go to a temple, we circumambulate, sometimes once, sometimes three times, or sometimes five. The idea is that *īśvara* is the center of our actions and prayers at the temple. Even though we cannot circumambulate the Lord all day, we can do so symbolically, by treating him as the center of all our activities.

The second part of the prayer, *svasti na indro vṛddhaśravāḥ*, means, may Indra, of great fame, be auspicious to us. Indra is the king of all the gods, the most famous and the most powerful. According to the Vedic scriptures there is a presiding deity for every function of the human body. Indra is the presiding deity of one's arms, and, therefore, he is the god of the strength with which we perform various actions. May we enjoy the blessing of Indra. The first part of the prayer says, "May we perform auspicious actions." One needs the grace of Indra to perform auspicious actions because he is the presiding deity of action or *karma*. May Indra bless us so that actions we perform with our hands are auspicious and of the nature of service to *īśvara*.

*Svasti naḥ pūṣā viśvavedāḥ*. Another *devatā* in this prayer is Pūṣan, the nourisher. This is one of the many names of Sūrya, the sun god. The sun is the nourisher of the universe because the rains are made possible only by the sun; the heat of the sun transforms water into clouds, which then come down as rain. It is the sun that is responsible for the rain from which comes the food that sustains and nourishes life. Pūṣan is therefore the nourisher. Oh nourisher, oh sun god, may you shower auspiciousness upon us; may you be favorable to us. The Sun god is also the pre-

siding deity of the eyes, because only when the sun illumines objects can the eyes see colors and forms. By the grace of the sun may we see what is auspicious.

*Svasti naḥ tārksyaḥ ariṣṭanemiḥ.* Tārksya is a name of the eagle-god Garuḍa, who is the vehicle of Lord Viṣṇu or Nārāyaṇa. *Ariṣṭanemi* means one whose flight cannot be obstructed. May this Tārksya, Garuḍa, be auspicious and favorable to us so that there are no obstacles in our pursuit of knowledge. This prayer is offered in reference to the study of *brahma-vidyā*. We want the words of the teacher to carry their meaning to us. Garuḍa, the eagle, is the vehicle of Nārāyaṇa, meaning that Lord Nārāyaṇa comes to us riding on Garuḍa. So also, *brahman* comes to us, as though 'riding' on the words of the teacher. Just as there are no obstructions to the movement of Garuḍa, so also, let there be no obstruction in our learning. May it be such that we may listen to the words of the teacher and understand them.

*Svasti naḥ bṛhaspatiḥ dadhātu.* Bṛhaspati is the preceptor of the gods. He represents great intelligence and is the presiding deity of intelligence and speech. We seek the grace of Bṛhaspati so that we are blessed with intelligence and our speech functions properly. By the grace of Bṛhaspati, may we be inspired with right thoughts and words so that we can praise the gods and perform right actions.

This is a prayer that seeks the grace of all the presiding deities. A few of them are mentioned here, but the idea is that, by the grace of all the gods, may the entire body-senses-mind-intellect complex be favorable to us. We require the favor of the body, the mind, and the personality; only then is learning and gaining this knowledge possible. If the mind does not favor us, we have great difficulty in applying ourselves to the study. The serenity of one's mind and that of the entire personality is possible only when all the presiding deities are favorable to the person. We are thus seeking the favor of the deities, so that all the resources available to us function properly and we may learn. Lord Kṛṣṇa says in the Bhagavad Gita that the mind can be either a friend or an enemy <sup>8</sup>.

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<sup>8</sup>BG 6.5

We want the mind to be our friend; we don't want it to create obstacles in our path. We want the mind to always be available to us.

*Om śāntiḥ śāntiḥ śāntiḥ.* Let there be peace, peace, peace. May there be no obstacle to the peace of the mind stemming from the factors relating to the individual personality, from those relating to the elemental forces, and those controlled by the cosmic forces.

The prayer is for gaining a mind that is composed, conducive, and fit for learning from or listening to the teacher.

*To be continued...*



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