

Kathopanishad
Shibir 5 Summary
Pravachan 7 (30.8.2022)

Please Note: This is an English summary of the pravachan by a seeker, Rimaben Dhanky and has been uploaded here for the benefit of the English reader.

We are doing the last three shloks of the third valli of the first chapter of Shri Kathopanishad. In this valli, we saw the nature of jivatma - contaminated soul and paramatma – supreme soul. We understood senses, sense objects, mind, intellect, and soul with the metaphor of a chariot. We also learned that to go towards the destination of infinite substance, how to make the intellect discerning. You must understand the importance of the soul and become self-restrained. You have to know how to sink senses into the mind, mind into the intellect, and intellect into the soul. Then we saw the Rishi calling out and telling us,

Arise! Awake! Having reached the great (Teachers) learn (realise that Atman). Like the sharp edge of a razor is that path, difficult to cross and hard to tread – thus say the wise.

Nachiketa asked Yam, “What happens after death? Do I survive or die? Am I the body or am I the conscious soul?” If Yam said that you die when your body dies, it would have been wrong, as the soul is eternal. If Yam said that he does not die, only his name and body get changed, Nachiketa might get confused and it may not make sense to him as he cannot see the soul. So, instead of giving a direct answer, he explained to him the nature of the soul.

In the 15th shlok, it is explained, how should be your faith and what should you expect when you experience the soul.

Shlok 15:

He, who has realised that (Atman) which is without sound, without touch, without form, without decay, and also without taste, without smell, without beginning, without end, beyond the mahat (great), eternal and unchanging, is freed from the jaws of death.

This shlok explains six attributes of the soul.

1. Asparshadi: The soul is a reality that is beyond the senses. It is neither inanimate nor paudgalic. It does not have physical properties like touch etc. Therefore, even after direct experience, you will not be able to touch-see-smell-hear the soul. It is not tangible, gross, or physical, yet, it is a conscious

entity full of peace and bliss having subtle properties like knowledge, etc. It is explained through negation for our understanding as it cannot be perceived by the senses, in fact, the senses function due to the soul's sovereignty. In a dead body, all the senses are present but without the inspiration of the soul, none of them can work. At the time of self-realisation or aparokshanubhuti, do not expect to touch or smell the soul. You only can experience it.

2. Avyayam nityam - The soul does not die, decay, or perish. It is such a timeless entity. You were always there and will always be there - while transmigrating or at liberation. If you had a form, at some point you would get old - but the soul is unchanging, undecaying. Param Krupalu Dev says there is no dev like the soul. Anandghanji used to say, "Namo muj" - I bow down to myself (as a soul).
3. Anadi - Beginningless - There is no beginning of the soul. It was never created. It is a natural, self-luminous, substance that is beyond cause and effect. A pot is created from clay. It will decay, or meet with an accident and break and go back to its cause - clay. The soul is beyond cause and effect. It was not the effect of some cause. It is an-adi - beginningless. It is a negation of that with which you are familiar.

We did two experiments, one of them was the pursuit of triangle.

The spiritual pursuit of the triangle: (You keep watching yourself in all activities)

The other is the experiment 'stop'. We all sleep at night, we leave the whole world behind us as it is. We do not solve anything at that time. In the same way, we should leave the whole world behind us when we are awake for a few minutes at any time during the day. It can be 1-2-3 minutes and not more. You are not a mother or a father at night, you are not aware of the body, or its problems. Do the same thing 10-15 times during the day for a minute. Go to sleep. It is like a game of stop or statue. This way, the wheel of the mind will stop for a minute. - first you were engrossed in it, now you see it as separate. This is exactly what the Enlightened Ones do. Param Krupalu Dev has also said in Atmasiddhiji -

Chhute dehadyas toh, nahi karta tu karma;

Nahi bhokta tu tehno, ae ja dharmano marma.

On renouncing the false identification with the body, you no longer remain the doer of karma, nor the receiver of its fruits. This can happen at the 4th gunasthanak - spiritual ladder itself, you do not have to wait till the 14th gunasthanak.

4. Anant – infinite

Bhasyu nij swaroop te, shuddh chetnaroop;

Ajar, amar, avinashi ne, dehatit swaroop.

I now experience myself as pure consciousness, which is ageless, immortal, indestructible, and distinct from the body. Param Krupalu Dev was so enraptured by the experience that He uses several words to show its eternal nature.

The soul is endless, never destroyed, beyond cause and effect. It is like a screen. Movies start and end. You are the screen. The audience sees the movie, the Enlightened Ones see the screen. Anadmayi Ma said a Guru is like a dhol. The louder you beat it, the louder its sound. He is the external cause for increasing your purity. The gold always remains, ornaments change their form, but gold remains. Learn to catch that I-ness, that immortality. Then you will experience it directly within a short time.

5. Mahatti- superior - The is subtler and more superior to great intellect also. In fact, intellect functions because of the soul. It is like the bulb that lights up when electricity passes through it. To become self-restrained, you need mind and intellect; you can cultivate that without the soul. However, to turn within, you need the support of the soul.
6. Dhruvam –The soul is eternal and changing. It may be possible for something to be eternal and constantly changing, however, the soul's nature is unchanging. The changing mode is not you. Any part of you that changes is not you. If you think that your memory has become weaker, it means that you are not the memory. Having experienced the soul in this manner, one is free from fear of death. The body will perish. The immortal self will remain forever. The fear of death does not remain once the identification is with the atman or soul. Realise such a soul. Be doubtless that you are eternal. Yam, who is God of Death is saying that once you experience the self, you won't have to get scared of me. It is a must to know this soul in this life, you will become doubtless that it is an eternal flow of consciousness.

**“Aham nirvikalpo nirakara rupo
vibhut vatcha sarvatra sarvendriyanam
na cha sangatham naiva muktir na meyaha
chidananda rupah Shivo ham Shivo ham”**

I am devoid of duality, I am formless, I exist everywhere, pervading all senses, I am neither attached, neither free nor captive, I am the form of consciousness and bliss, I am the eternal Shiva.

As Anandghanji says - Ab hum amar bhaye na mareng- I have become immortal, I won't die. You have taken birth and died infinite times. If you attain self-realisation, you will not die.

Shlok 16:

The intelligent one, having heard and repeated this ancient story of Nachiketa as told by Lord Death, is glorified in the world of Brahma.

Shloks 16 and 17 show the fruits of action of this scripture. In the 15th shlok, the soul was appreciated. In shloks 16 and 17, it is praising the scripture i.e. Upanishad, which describes the soul substance. It inspires the seeker to study it and practice it in life. Those who listen to this scripture, and contemplate it will understand the world of Brahma - soul. The one who is a Teacher- Guru who gives a discourse on this excellent scripture and the disciple, who is listening to it, both are praised as both of them have a liking for the soul.

Earlier, you only liked the stories of sense objects and sensual pleasures. Now you are interested in the soul, which cannot be seen or touched. That's why, Rishi is calling you intelligent - 'medhavi'.

Worship Govind, Worship Govind, Worship Govind. O foolish one! Rules of Grammar will not save you at the time of death.

Here Rishi calls you intelligent or wise because you become wise without vices. If you only listen to the satsang and get stuck there, you are a fool. If you listen, contemplate, reflect, and apply satsang in your daily life, you are wise or intelligent. The Enlightened One wants you to progress in your spiritual life in some way or the other. Today you are clapping when you listen to the discourses on the soul, earlier as a child, you clapped when firecrackers were burst.

The listener should be like Nachiketa and the speaker should be like Yam. Nachiketa has discernment, respectable conduct, selfless love, and readiness to sacrifice himself for the well-being of his father. He had faith in the scriptures and realised that his father was doing something wrong. He was courageous to stand against his father's wrongdoing to make sure that his father benefited himself. He was patient and practiced penance. Such a listener is wise. He had clarity, firm faith in truth, and was not a hypocrite. By asking the first two boons regarding his father that he should not get angry with him when he went back, and how to attain heaven, shows that he was clear in his intention. Nachiketa was intelligent and he repeated everything that Yam taught him. He did not get enticed by the temptations of heaven.

Yam is a self-realised soul. He says, "Who else can describe the soul except me? Yam is a Guru in Kathopanishad. Guru is the name of consciousness or empty space from where you can come out. Yam knows the scriptures and soul both. He is skillful in communicating and is motivating too. He is a scholar but is humble.

He has made an eight-year-old child get the knowledge of the soul. He taught Nachiketa about self-realisation and he gave him some boons too.

In the 23rd shlok of the second valli, it is said,

This Atman cannot be attained by the study of Vedas nor by intelligence, nor by much hearing. It is gained by him who chooses (prays to) this (Atman) alone. To him, this Atman reveals its true nature.

Here, it is said that the soul cannot be attained by the study of Vedas, nor by intelligence, not by much hearing. Here, in the 16th shlok of the third valli, it is said that the intelligent one, having heard and repeated this ancient story of Nachiketa as told by Lord Death, is glorified in the world of Brahma. These two shloks are not contradictory. Let's understand it this way.

Here, Brahmlok does not mean the highest heaven. It means to abide in the self. When there is an eligible speaker and a listener, then they are glorified in the world of Brahma.

Discourse is an effective tool. But the discourse alone will not help. Along with the discourse, you need to glorify the soul, understand its importance, remember it all the time, long for it, and suffer pain till you do not attain self-realisation. Discourse is an effective tool but you do not have to stop at it, you should go ahead and follow the process. This is the implied meaning of the shlok. The soul abides in the highest and the purest state and is glorified in the world of Brahma.

Shlok 17:

Whoever with devotion recites, before an assembly of Brahmans or at the time of shraddh ceremony of forefathers, this highest secret, obtains thereby immortality, obtains immortality.

Having praised the sincere teacher and receiver, if both of them are focused they can obtain immortality. This is the concluding shlok of the concluding valli of adhyay 1.

This scripture should be recited in two places. 1. Before an assembly of Brahmans 2. At the time of shraddh ceremony of forefathers. Here the last sentence is said twice. It means that now the recitation of this scripture is over. One school of thought believes that this is the only chapter of Kathopanishad. It ends here, as it says, 'Iti'. It is also showing the fruits of self-realisation. The other school of thought believes that there are two chapters and 'Iti' is written to show that the first chapter is over.

How is this knowledge? How is the dialogue between Yam and Nachiketa? This dialogue is deep, subtle, and concealed or secret. It is secret in the sense that only

those who are hungry for spirituality will like it, others will get bored. They will criticise it. Those who are hungry and desperate for self-realisation should only listen to this scripture. You may feel like clapping and the other person might start dozing off in satsang. When you are spiritually hungry, you will love the topic of the soul. It has extraordinary knowledge.

To listen to this scripture, you need the right people and the right time. You can recite it in the following places.

1. Right people - Before an assembly of Brahmans: Here Brahman does not mean a caste of Hindus. Here Brahman means the one who has the virtues like subsidence of passions – sham, control of the mind – dam, forgiveness – kshama, love – prem, etc. He should be Brahman from karma too, it means he should have good conduct, be desirous to attain self-realisation, and is self-restrained. He follows the rules of worshipping. He serves others. You should recite this scripture in front of such a seeker. Your near and dear one may not like to listen to it and get bored of it. This scripture is for the true seeker, who desperately wants to attain the soul.

Usually, people like to read ‘Kamasutra’, which was written by Rishi Vatsyayan. In this scripture too, it is clearly said, “You enjoy sensual pleasures once and remain content for a long time. Or enjoy it once and go into samadhi.” You cannot read ‘Kamasutra’ in front of a child, he won’t understand anything, he will love fairy tales. You should be mature enough to read the scriptures.

The Enlightened Ones get transformed the right way even if the scriptures are based on false beliefs – mithyatva. The ignorant person may read the right scripture but take the wrong meaning from it. You are responsible for your elevation or downfall. You are alone on the island like Robinson Crusoe to either get elevated or fall.

Those who recite this scripture can attain immortality in Brahmlok. If you are reciting this scripture as a business or a hobby, you cannot attain immortality in Brahmlok.

2. Right time – If this scripture is recited at the time of shraddh ceremony of forefathers, it can bring good results. Some schools of thought believe that the soul leaves the body and stays in that house for 12 days, so he should listen to this scripture. The other people who come over are in silence, so this recitation can bring good results.

Psychologists describe four moments of life as the most important ones.

1. When you are born, it is one of the most important moments because this is the first time you become independent, take a breath on your own, and

see your mother. You will take food independently. When you are born, certain chakras get changed, you become more receptive, and this gets repeated on your birthday.

2. When you fall in love, it is the most important moment. For the first time, you are independently choosing your life partner. Earlier, you never had a choice to select your parents or siblings. Now, you are using your discerning faculty and choosing a partner.
3. When someone near and dear dies, it is the most important moment of your life. The one whom you love, he/she is your support, when that person dies, you feel that something within you has died. There is a sudden vacuum in life. Even if a couple keeps fighting, when she dies, he goes into depression. There is no interest in life. He does not know what to do. This is an important moment, if you listen to Kathopanishad at that time, it will be absorbed within.
4. The moment of your death - do not wait for this moment. You might be too ill or unconscious at that time. If you have developed strong faith during this lifetime, that will help you in the end. You won't have the energy to think or speak, but faith will help you.

In such a serious environment, when such scriptures are recited, the person becomes dispassionate and focuses inwards.

O Soul, know the nature of the soul and understand the method of self-realisation.

Arise! Awake! Having reached the great (Teachers) learn (realise that Atman). Like the sharp edge of a razor is that path, difficult to cross and hard to tread – thus say the wise.