



ईशावास्य उपनिषत्
Isavasya Upanishad
Volume 5

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ओं शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः ॥
इति ईशावास्य उपनिषत्

Every Upanishad has explicitly or implicitly two distinct sections. The first section is concerned only with pure ज्ञानं - Pure Knowledge - Knowledge of ब्रह्मन् - ईश्वर-आत्मा - The SELF in every self. That is what we saw earlier in the first 14 verses of this Upanishad.

The second section is what is generally called as उपासन section, which is meant exclusively for मननं and निदिध्यासनं, reflection and contemplation on the content of the Upanishad Knowledge. This उपासन section takes different forms in different Upanishads, and what one learns from this section is also different for different people, depending on the state of one's own maturity.



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The concluding verses of this Upanishad, verses 15 to 18, constitute the उपासन section for this Upanishad, and it takes the form of a Prayer at the most critical time of one's life. It is a Prayer for Divine Revelation.

Here is a person, a devotee of परमेश्वर, who has lived a long and full life, a life of सत्यं and धर्म, a life of कर्म योग and ध्यान योग, together with स्वाध्याय प्रवचन - regular Scriptural studies, diligently cultivating ईश्वर ज्ञानं - God Consciousness throughout life. This person understands and appreciates the nature of पूर्णज्ञानं - Totality of Knowledge - as revealed by the Upanishads, and he is full of श्रद्धा in his pursuits of ब्रह्म विद्या - Total Fulfillment in Life. But, in spite of all his best efforts, he has not yet realized that highest truth of Fullness of Being in Himself. He has not yet realized That जीव ब्रह्म ऐक्यं - one's Spiritual Identity with आत्मा - The All-pervading परमेश्वर in himself. He has not yet realized that Total Fulfillment in life expounded in the Upanishads.

We may immediately note here that this is indeed the case with respect to almost all people, including those who are among the most spiritually inclined. Therefore, what the Upanishad says with respect to this particular Devotee of परमेश्वर should be of interest to all of us.

Now, about this devotee of परमेश्वर. Times have passed. Life has taken its natural course for this person in accordance with his own प्रारब्ध कर्म - the fruits of his own past actions. Now, the time has come for him to leave his body and he finds himself on his death-bed. Realizing That Divine Self within oneself within one's own very life has been his overriding Goal of Life, now he feels that he has to leave his body without realizing That Goal. He has done all he could, throughout his life to achieve That Goal. Obviously, that has not been enough.

What can he do now to help himself? Following the tradition of his Times, all his life he has been worshipping his इष्ट देवताs, सूर्य देवता and अग्नि देवता, as visible manifestations of परमेश्वर. By worshipping his इष्ट देवताs he has been worshipping परमेश्वर. At this time, when his current worldly life is about to end, all he can do - the best he can do - to reach his cherished Goal is to think of परमेश्वर through his इष्ट देवताs and pray for Divine Revelation, NOW or at least in his next life.

That is exactly what he does, namely, think of परमेश्वर and परमेश्वर only at the last moments of his life, which is indeed the most important time in one's life. In the next four



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verses, the Upanishad describes his prayerful thoughts on परमेश्वर at this critical time. First addressing That परमेश्वर, manifested visually as सूर्य देवता - Lord SUN, he says in his thoughts,

हिरण्मयेन पात्रेण सत्यस्य अपिहितं मुखं
तत् त्वं पूषन् अपावृणु सत्य धर्माय दृष्टये ॥

हिरण्मयेन पात्रेण सत्यस्य अपिहितं मुखं
सत्यस्य मुखं - The Face of Truth, the Truth of ब्रह्मन् behind The Form of SUN
अपिहितं - is hidden
हिरण्ययेन पात्रेण - by the Golden lid - by the Golden Orb of the SUN

I realize that the face of TRUTH, the Truth of ब्रह्मन् behind the Form of SUN is hidden, is concealed by the Golden resplendent orb of the SUN.

तत् त्वं पूषन् अपावृणु सत्य धर्माय दृष्टये

पूषन् - O! Lord SUN

तत् त्वं अपावृणु - Please remove, please open up, please lift up, That Golden lid, That resplendent orb of Thine so that

सत्य धर्माय दृष्टये - I, The Devotee of TRUTH may see That TRUTH, That सत्यं, That TRUTH behind thy Form.

I am not satisfied by appearances any more. I am no longer content with seeing Thy Golden orb. I know that there is a TRUTH hidden behind Thy resplendent Form. There is THE TRUE SUN, The Cosmic Spiritual Being behind the SUN and I want to see That Being, and recognize and realize my kinship with That Being, says the Devotee.

The expression हिरण्मय पात्र - "Golden container" (The उपाधि) represents all the attractive physical forms इदं - objects in this entire creation.

I have been seeing the perishable beauty of this material world of beings, including the Form of SUN all my life. Now I want to see the imperishable beauty that lies behind all forms and names. The external beauty of thy form is only a visible expression of the Spiritual beauty behind Thy True Self. Therefore, पूषन् - O! Lord SUN, please condescend to reveal the TRUTH behind Thy Form, Thy True SELF to me. I am सत्य



धर्म - pursuit of **truth**. Pursuit of सत्यं is my धर्म, it is my life , my religion, so says the devotee.

Addressing सूर्य देवता - lord SUN again, the devotee says, in his thoughts

पूषन् एकर्षे यम सूर्य प्राजापत्य व्यूह रश्मीन् समूह तेजः
यत्ते रूपं कल्याणतमं तत्ते पश्यामि यः असौ असौ पुरुषः सोऽहमस्मि ॥

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पूषन् - O! Lord SUN - The Nourisher of this whole world

एकर्षे - The only orbiter on the sky

यम -The regulator, the controller, the governor of all activities and processes in this world

सूर्य प्राजापत्य - O! Lord SUN, the son of प्रजापति

व्यूह रश्मीन् - Please remove Thy rays

समूह तेजः - Please gather up, withdraw, set aside your dazzling effulgence so that

यत्ते रूपं कल्याणतमं तत्ते पश्यामि

ते - ते प्रसादात् - By your grace

ते पश्यामि - I may see That - See *what?*

यत्ते रूपं कल्याणतमं रूपं - That which is your most auspicious, the Most Glorious Form , namely

That which is the Form of the TRUTH behind your resplendent orb, which means, That which is the SELF in you. *Why do I want to see That SELF in You?* Because

यः असौ असौ पुरुषः सः अहं अस्मि

यः असौ - That कल्याणतमं रूपं - That Most Auspicious - The Most Glorious Being behind your resplendent form

असौ पुरुषः -That Auspicious Being

सः अहं अस्मि - He, I am

That कल्याणतमं रूपं - That Auspicious Being behind your resplendent form, That सत्य स्वरूप रूपं , That never-changing TRUTH behind your ever-changing resplendent Form ब्रह्मन् - That परमेश्वर - That आत्मा - That SELF in You - I am - I am That SELF. The SELF in you is the SELF in myself.



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That spiritual Reality in you is also the Spiritual Reality in me. In That Spiritual Reality - Absolute Reality, Eternal Truth, there is no difference. The only difference between you and me is in our bodies. As सूर्य देवता, You are indeed a huge shining body. As a human being, I am indeed a minute creature in comparison. But behind both of us is the same Immortal Divine Self - so thinks the Devotee.

Let us briefly stop to reflect on सः अहम् अस्मि

This knowledge of the essential spiritual oneness of the whole universe is emphasized again and again in our Upanishads. Differences in Form, Name, Size, Quantity, Function, etc. do not involve any difference in Absolute reality. The universe is all differences on the surface, but unity at the depths. The आत्मा is the Absolute Reality behind all beings, big and small alike.

A big wave and a small bubble of water have their basic identity, basic oneness, in the ocean. In this way the Upanishads direct us to recognize the one behind the many.

The devotee is not overwhelmed simply because the Sun is extraordinary in size and function and he is relatively an insignificant creature. His Upanishad knowledge tells him, his penetrating vision assures him, that behind the big and small, the significant and the insignificant, there is Spiritual ONENESS.

The उपाधिस - Forms, names, attributes, etc. are temporary limitations. They come and go. All our Upanishads visualize also a Supreme being without any उपाधि. That is the SELF in every Being, Pure and Perfect, Birthless and Deathless, in which all are ONE and That ONE is all.

सः अहं अस्मि - He - That ONE - I am - which is the equivalent of the वेद महा वाक्य
ब्रह्मैवाऽहं अस्मि - I am indeed ब्रह्मन्.

Let us now continue with the Upanishad. The devotee is now getting weaker and weaker, but only physically. His mind and बुद्धि are firm and steady in God-consciousness. As he moves closer and closer into the last moments of his life, his thoughts also move as follows.

वायुः अनिलं अमृतं अथेदं भस्मान्तं शरीरं ।
ओं कृतो स्मर कृतं स्मर कृतो स्मर कृतं स्मर ॥



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ओं - O! Lord. As we have already seen, ओं is शब्द रूप प्रत्यक्ष ब्रह्मन् Direct manifestation of ब्रह्मन् in the form of sound ओं. Addressing That ब्रह्मन् directly in his thoughts, the devotee says:

ओं - O! Lord

अथ वायुः अनिलं अमृतं meaning - अथ वायुः अनिलं अमृतं (प्रतिपध्यतां)

अथ - now that my last moments have arrived

वायुः - Let my breath, let my प्राण - vital air

अमृतं अनिलं (प्रतिपध्यतां) - merge into the immortal air - All-pervading प्राण. By Thy grace let my प्राण merge into the All-pervading Immortal प्राण You are; and

अथ - then

ओं - O! Lord, By Thy Grace

इदं भस्मान्तं शरीरं meaning इदं शरीरं भस्मान्तं (भूयात्) - Let this शरीर - let this body be reduced to भस्मान्तं - Holy ashes, which means, let the ashes of this body become one with पूर्ण इदं, the All Inclusive material cause for this entire creation, thereby, let the ashes of this शरीर material (भस्मान्तं) become holy ashes (भस्मान्तं) direct manifestation of ब्रह्मन् Itself.

There is something here to understand with reference to the expression भस्मान्तं "Holy Ashes". As we have already seen ब्रह्मन् is both पूर्ण अदः and पूर्ण इदं which means ब्रह्मन् is both the Efficient cause as well as the Material cause for this entire creation. It is That Material Cause that is indicated by the expression पूर्ण इदं.

Any material in this creation is पूर्ण इदं, when it is recognized (by knowledge) as a manifestation of परमेश्वर Itself, which means, in one's awareness, that material is a visible expression of ब्रह्मन् Itself.

When भस्मान्तं - the ashes of this bodily material is recognized (by ईशावास्यं इदं सर्वं knowledge) as भस्मान्तं - Holy Ashes, then in one's awareness, That "Holy Ashes" is a visible expression of ब्रह्मन् Itself. Being so, such "Holy Ashes" is a विभूति of परमेश्वर, a Glory of परमेश्वर.



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That is why we receive भस्मान्तं विभूति as ईश्वर प्रसादं in our Temples.

The significance of devotionally putting on such विभूति on one's forehead is a visible expression of being in God-consciousness. Such is also the significance of devotionally putting on कुंकुं, चन्दन, or any other material recognized as Holy. Devotionally putting on all such materials on one's forehead is a visible expression of one's awareness of being in God-Consciousness.

In the context here, the devotee's prayer is that when the body is reduced to ashes, they become "Holy Ashes" by the Very Grace of ब्रह्मन् . That is the meaning of अथेदं भस्मान्तं शरीरं. Further, continuing his thoughts, the devotee says:

ओं कृतो स्मर कृतं स्मर कृतो स्मर कृतं स्मर

Holding his बुद्धि firmly in God-consciousness, allowing no distractions whatsoever, he says, ओं. Then he gives an order to his mind, which is the instrument for thinking. O! Mind

कृतो स्मर - This is the time for you to remember all that is fit to remember, therefore,

कृतो स्मर - remember all of them - *what to remember?*

कृतं स्मर - Remember only those कर्मs, all actions done by this body in thought word and deed, throughout this life, in pursuance of its Total commitment to knowledge and service.

पूर्णज्ञानं - Totality of knowledge and

ईश्वर कैकर्यं - service to परमेश्वर, service to the health and welfare of the entire world, all of which helped you to remain steadily and steadfastly in God-Consciousness at all times.

कृतं स्मर- Remember all those actions - ONLY those actions. He repeats the same order to his mind again. कृतो स्मर, कृतं स्मर repetition implies firmness. The Mind is fully under his control.

O! Mind. This is the time for you to remember all that is fit to remember. Remember all those कर्मs, all actions done by this body in thought word and deed, throughout its life in pursuance of its Total commitment to knowledge and service, पूर्णज्ञानं - Totality of knowledge and ईश्वर कैकर्यं - service to परमेश्वर, service to the health and welfare of



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the entire world, all of which helped you to remain steadily and firmly in God-consciousness at all times. Remember all those actions, ONLY those actions.

Let us briefly stop here to reflect on कृतो स्मर, कृतं स्मर - the significance of what one remembers at the time of Death. There is never any death for the जीव of a person. Death is only for the physical body. For an ordinary person, death is the beginning of another bodily existence to continue the process of one's natural evolution - evolution of the जीव towards further spiritual upliftment, or spiritual degradation, depending on one's पूर्व कर्म फल - fruits of one's past actions.

This makes the moment of Death the most critical time in one's life. It is the moment of critical change for the person, a change for the better or worse in one's continuing evolution, because whatever a person thinks, whatever a person remembers at the time of death, that is what the person will be after "Death" - so says Sri Krishna. Let us recall these words of Sri Krishna in Chapter 8 of भगवत् गीता

यं यं चापि स्मरन् भावं त्यजति अन्ते कलेबरं ।

तं तमेवैति कौन्तेय सदा तद्भावं भावितः ॥

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यं यं भावं स्मरन् अन्ते कलेबरं त्यजति - Remembering or thinking about whatever object, whatever Form, name attributes, etc., one departs from one's physical body at the time of death

तं तं भावं एव एति - one reaches only that object, That Form, name and attributes, which means, whatever a person remembers, whatever a person thinks at the time of death, that alone he reaches after death, because

सदा तद्भावं भावितः

सदा - for a long time, his अन्तःकरण mind and बुद्धि has remained conditioned and committed to that object, Form, Name or attributes, so much, that his जीव continues to remain so conditioned and committed when it leaves the body. Thus whatever a person thinks and remembers at the time of Death that is what that person will be after death.

If that is so, does it mean that I can indulge myself doing anything I want from time to time throughout my life and just think of परमेश्वर at the time of death so that I can go to Heaven, or become परमेश्वर Itself after death?



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No - It does not work that way, simply because it is not possible. If one has not been thinking of परमेश्वर most of one's life, it is just impossible for one to think of परमेश्वर at the time of death. At the time of death one can think only of those things which have occupied most of one's cultivated thought life. Whatever you will be able to remember at the time of death, and whatever you can be after death, will only be in-keeping with your cumulative cultivated thought -life.

That being so, what should you do to ensure the most, the highest upliftment for you in your next life? भगवान् says

तस्मात् सर्वेषु कालेषु मां अनुस्मर युध्य च 8 - 7

Since at the time of death one can only remember those things which have been occupying one's thoughts throughout one's life

तस्मात् - therefore

सर्वेषु कालेषु - at all times, during all your waking hours, from this moment onwards

मां अनुस्मर - Be thinking of ME - the परमेश्वर - just as you have understood परमेश्वर from the Teachings of the Upanishads as सत्यं-ज्ञानं-अनन्तं-ब्रह्म, सत्-चित्-आनन्द-स्वरूप आत्मा, अक्षरं ब्रह्म परमं. Be in such God-Consciousness. Be in such thoughts on परमेश्वर in yourself at all times and at the same time

युध्य च - Do whatever you have to do in pursuance of your commitment to पूर्णज्ञानं and ईश्वर कैंकर्य - Totality of Knowledge and service to परमेश्वर, service to the health and welfare of the entire world. So says Sri Krishna.

Now we can understand why the devotee in ईशावास्य उपनिषत् gives the कृतो स्मर, कृतं स्मर Order to his mind on the eve of his departure from his physical body.

Returning to the Upanishad, the final moment of his life has now arrived for the devotee and he departs from the body with his last prayer in his mind

अग्ने नय सुपथा राये अस्मान् विश्वानि देव वयुनानि विद्वान् ।

युयोधि अस्मन् जुहुराणं एनो भूयिष्ठां ते नमउक्तिं विधेम ॥

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This time the prayer is addressed to परमेश्वर manifested as अग्निदेवता. The prayer is not only on his own behalf, but it is also on behalf of all devotees like him, who are still



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struggling to gain the Fullness of Being , each in oneself, and Total Fulfillment in Life, each in one's own life. In this silent prayer he says

अग्ने - O! Lord

अस्मान् नय सुपथा राये - Please lead us to the Supreme Wealth of मोक्ष by सुपथा, by the direct path, by the right path, by the obstacle free path of life. Why is it that we are asking you to do that for us? Because

विश्वानि देव वयुनानि चिद्भान् - देव - O! Lord, You are the चिद्भान्, You are the Knower of all the numerous ways to gain मोक्ष. Therefore

युयोधि अस्मन् जुहुराणं एनः - Please remove from us all the crooked deceitful attractions of sinful thoughts, words and deeds which obstruct our vision of परमेश्वर. And for all Thy Grace, what can we do to express our appreciation and gratitude?

भूयिष्ठां ते नम उक्तिं विधेम We offer our Best Prayers to you. We offer you the Best Words we can find to express the Glory of the Lord.

How best can we express the Glory of the Lord? These are the Best Words we can find to express the Glory of the Lord.

ओं

पूर्णम् अदः पूर्णम् इदं पूर्णात् पूर्णम् उदच्यते ।

पूर्णस्य पूर्णम् आदाय पूर्णं एवावशिष्यते ॥

ओं शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः ॥

Thus ends ईशावास्य उपनिषत्

We will take up केनोपनिषत् next time.