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This Booklet contains in a nutshell the principal behind the various types of meditation and the ways for God realisation as given in KAIVALYOPANISHAD – part of Hindu Scriptures.

SADHANAS FROM KAIVALYOPANISHAD



Swami Shantananda Puri

Sadhanas from KAIVALYOPANISHAD

Upanishads form part of the Vedas (Basic Scriptures). Kaivalyopanishad, as the name denotes, means an Upanishad that deals with Kaivalya – the state of non-duality where the world no longer appears and only that blissful Supreme Consciousness exists. This Upanishad belongs to the Atharva Veda and deals with the means of attaining Kaivalya.

This Upanishad is a record of the spiritual conversation between a learned sage of yore called Aswalyana and Brahma, the creator.

The purpose of the Upanishad is to reveal the path by which one can remove the obstacles in the way of attaining the highest bliss by realising our

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Bhakti² Yoga (path of love) accompanying Dhyana Yoga (meditation). The sadhana through love and meditation will be successful only if it is based on 'Sradha' which means a total unquestionable faith in Scriptures and the teachings of the Guru. The importance of Sradha as a sine-quo-non for any type of sadhana can never be over-emphasized. There is a Vedic hymn called "Sradha Sooktam" where sradha or faith has been visualised as a goddess with divine powers. The entire 17th chapter of the Srimad Bhagavad Gita has been devoted to 'Sradha'. It is the thought power which is fortified by Sradha.

The Bhaktiyoga on God with form, as also the meditation of the formless have both been dealt with in the Upanishad. Concentrated Love (Bhakti) for the Highest Divinity or Self or God alone will lead us

2. श्रद्धाभक्ति ध्यान योगादवेहि । (KAIVALYA I-2)

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Self ie; as to who we really are. The main obstacle is our identification with our body as 'I'. We consider ourselves as separate individuals with different bodies. Just as the electricity generated from a generator goes into all the bulbs and is linked with each other by the continuous flow of current, the Supreme Energy called as the Self or Paramatman pervades all the bodies and thus forms one indivisible Totality. The identification with the individual body as the Self is the main sin we have all committed and it is this which has led us into all miseries and sufferings. This Upanishad tells¹ us the path for Self-realisation.

The ultimate knowledge constituting the Supreme bliss or peace which is called Moksha (Salvation) or Realisation can be obtained through

1. यथाऽचिरात् सर्वपापं व्यपोह्य
परात्परं पुरुषं याति विद्वान् । (KAIVALYA I-1)

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to the highest knowledge. This devotion or love for the goal is equally important in the path of meditation on the formless self.

What is the main key or Sadhana which opens up the door to God-realisation? It is 'tyaga'³ – renunciation of our sense of possession of all the objects of the phenomenal world including our own body. It is our deep seated sense of relationship with all the objects of the world through attachment, enmity, envy etc., which has been the cause of all our miseries and sufferings in our so called "waking state" which is in reality another dream. This sense of relationship keeps us tied down to the dream world called the world of the waking state. The strongest of these bondages is our identification with the body and considering ourselves as individuals apart from other people and the entire world. The

3. न कर्मणा न प्रजया धनेन त्यागे नैके ऽमृतत्व मानशुः ।

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body is a myth just as the body we assumed in our dream state, which disappeared on our waking up. The supreme divinity which has been functioning in the body is the only reality whose imagination or thought created a dream-like world. Only if we wake up from this dream of relationship, the dream world with all its attendant miseries and sufferings will vanish. What remains is the author of the dream script, who is alone in the non-dual state (KAIVALYA). It is the dreamer, the subject, who created an unreal world of objects by means of his thought force (it is only 'consciousness' at the cosmic level) and appears as if he is caught in his own web by establishing a nexus with these objects. All the objects in the dream world were only the projection of thoughts and so they were constituted and pervaded by the dreamer ie; the Self. There is, in reality, no world apart from the Self. It is just like the bulbs which are all pervaded by one electricity

have all been attempting to enter into the cave of the heart by stopping the mind which has created a dreamland called the "waking state". The hymns 3 & 4 of this Kaivalyopanishad occur also in the Maha-Narayanopanishad and is oft-quoted by all Vedic scholars. An interesting point is that in the extension of these hymns in the Mahanarayanopanishad the words 'yati' and 'sanyasa' are used for the first time perhaps (to my knowledge). Even in the first lexicon in Sanskrit called Amarakosa, these two words 'yati' or 'sanyasi' to denote monks have not been mentioned. All the Vedas (with Mantras in the Samhita) were compiled by Rishis (sages) most of whom were married and had a number of children too. This shows that in the olden days sages like Vyasa, Vasishtha, Bharadwaja etc were capable of attaining enlightenment without having recourse to formal sannyasa.

from the generator. The dream bodies which look real are infact a product of imagination i.e. the thought force. Thus 'tyaga' is renouncing the sense of individuality and separateness by realising that there is only one totality which is called as Supreme Self or Supreme Being, which alone has assumed the forms of all the objects in the world including all individuals.

The aforesaid knowledge or enlightenment can never be obtained through any amount of Karma Yoga involving rituals like pooja, havan or sacrifices like soma yaga nor can it be obtained by accumulating abundant wealth. Renunciation through repeated contemplation (vichara) will alone lead one to immortality. The Supreme Being resides in the heart and His abode being superior to Heaven even, those who see for it inside see that it is resplendently shining always and the great sages

Depending on the degree of dispassion (vairagya) and the type and intensity of sadhana done, even if one does not get immediate liberation while alive (Jeevan Mukti), the sadhakas can get progressive liberation (Krama Mukti). Here one has to have an expert knowledge of Vedanta (Non-dual Philosophy) and should have had his mind purified. Such people do not take birth again in this world. They go to the Brahma Lokas (Higher divine regions of purity) and get liberated at the time of final dissolution of the entire universe.

Now, the Kaivalyopanishad starts describing the conventional method of meditation almost in the same way as in chapter 6 of Srimad Bhagavad Gita. While most of the text books like the Kaivalya Upanishad describe various methods of meditation, they do not define the purpose of meditation, how all types of meditation converge in one path and why the meditation is necessary.

Meditation has been defined in a standard dictionary as "focusing one's mind for a time for spiritual purposes or for relaxation." Many mahatmas have defined it in various ways. The Yoga Sutras of Patanjali has defined YOGA (Union with the Supreme Being) as the process in which the mind is made empty of all thoughts. The mind is not an organ like the eye or the ear. It is only a bundle of continuously succeeding thoughts (like one wave succeeding another in the ocean). It is these thoughts relating to our body, wealth, relatives and other objects of the world which are superimposed on the pure being and hide the underlying infinite truth. These thoughts arise because of the various relationships we had established with all the unreal objects of the world, for example, attachment to wife & children, enmity, jealousy, hatred, envy etc. In order to control and stop all thoughts one should concentrate on the Self (or Atman), a favorite deity,

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all defects like attachment, hatred, jealousy etc. One should then concentrate on Lord Siva as the ultimate Supreme Being - full of peace, beyond all mental concepts, un-manifest, Infinite, one without any beginning or end, and all-pervasive form of bliss with amazing characteristics. One can get by heart the various hymns in Upanishads where all these attributes are given and is declared as indescribable. This hymn does not necessarily purport to advise one to concentrate on Lord with form. Even though Lord Siva has been mentioned as an example, by continuing such a sadhana the sadhaka will ultimately reach the self-effulgent, indestructible goal – the Supreme Brahman - the eternal witness of all. A sincere heartfelt prayer to one's Guru before starting any meditation is very effective and helpful. Even though the Upanishad has dealt with the process of meditation succinctly, the first prostration to the Master (Guru) has been

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a Mantra (sacred words impregnated with divine power) etc. This process is called meditation which results in the annihilation of all thoughts leading to a state of 'no mind' where the ultimate Supreme Being stands revealed in its pristine purity as our very self. One of the types of meditation is also achieved by practising specific processes of controlling the breath known as Pranayama. Here whenever the breath is stopped, automatically the thoughts are stopped. Now one of the processes of meditation is described succinctly.

In the initial stages one should seek a solitary place where one is likely to be the least disturbed. After seating himself in a comfortable posture and keeping his head, neck and body straight, one should first prostrate mentally to one's Guru. Now, one should think of the heart (as per Bhagawan Ramana it should be the spiritual heart on the right side of the chest) imagining it to be pure, bereft of

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prescribed in order to emphasize that one must have a Guru qualified as described in detail by Adi Sankara in his text "Viveka Chudamani" - the entire process should be learnt at his feet and a living Guru's Grace is an essential factor in getting success in any sadhana. This Upanishad has specified⁴ Lord Siva in his form along with his consort Parvati, with his throat with a blue or darkish tinge and with his three eyes etc. in the same breath, it uses other attributes of the formless Brahman also as one beyond the concepts of the mind, the one without form, also having infinite forms (in the form of all beings) and of the form of Pure Consciousness and bliss. One can reach the final goal by devoting oneself exclusively to any of the myriad gods and goddesses also provided one does

4. उमासहायं परमेश्वरं प्रभुं त्रिलोचनं नीलकण्ठं प्रशान्तम् ।
ध्यात्वा मुनिर्गच्छति भूतयोनिं . . . ॥ (KAIVALYA 6 & 7)

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it with the full belief and knowledge that one's favorite deity is not separate from other gods and through that form, the sadhaka is worshipping only the Supreme Being known also as Parabrahman. This is nothing but an echo of the statements made by Lord Krishna in chapter 9 (slokas 23 to 25) of Srimad Bhagawad Gita.

In the earlier stages of sadhana and for some sadhaka it may not be possible to grasp and concentrate only on a Lord without form as one bereft of objects like attachment, hatred etc as one untouched by sin or merit and never subjected to sorrows, immortal etc. It will be easier for them to think of a Lord like Siva with form but with all the aforementioned attributes of Parabrahman without form. Thus through such meditation alone one can get over one's ignorance and reach his goal. The Lord we realize ultimately through such concentrated meditation is 'ALL'. He is Brahma

The same idea is further elaborated in the next verse no. 10 of the Upanishad. If once the sadhak is internally convinced that his very self is pervading all the beings and also that all the beings are contained in his own self, he straightaway gets moksha (liberation) while alive. By whatever means of sadhana one approaches the Lord, all of them ultimately converge in this one factor of identification of oneself with all the beings of the world. The Upanishad stresses that this is the only intimate factor that leads one to God realisation and no other means will be able to achieve that end. As one realises that this entire waking state along with the world projected in it is all unreal, a dream drama, it is understood that the entire world and projected beings has only their Self as the material cause as they have not come from anywhere outside. The consciousness or chaitanya which is inside all the beings in the dream is a projection of his own self

the creator, He is Lord Siva the destroyer, He is Indra the enjoyer, He is the vital elan and He is the Moon. He is the greatest of the Lords. He is the Past and the Future too. He is eternal. This we come to realize as a result of the meditation. Thus by realizing the eternal Supreme Being one becomes immortal. Realising the Supreme Being who has become all (World, all beings etc) is the only way to be free and attain liberation.

When once a person realises the supreme divinity of all beings in the world there could be no scope for hatred, jealousy, extreme attachments etc which form the main impediment against our realising the ultimate truth and attaining absolute bliss. Thus, all the factors which are responsible for agitating our mind creating and consequentially falling a prey to all sufferings and miseries get destroyed and absolute peace descends.

and nothing more. As one imagines by concocting all the dream world and its beings, the entire world and his beings are all in his mind only and nothing takes place outside. It only looks or it only appears as if the entire dream sequence is taking place outside in the world imagined by himself. A portion of this verse occurs in one or the other of the 10 principal Upanishads and infact most of the main verses in this upanishad have all been taken sometimes even verbatim from Srimad Bhagavad Gita, Ashtavakra Gita, and the various principal Upanishads. In that way, Kaivalyopanishad can be considered as containing the most essential teachings of the 10 principal ones and other classical texts.

Now the Upanishad moves⁵ to a different type

5. आत्मान मरणिं कृत्वा प्रणवं चोत्तरारणिम् ।
ज्ञान निर्मथनाभ्यासा त्पाशं दहति पण्डितः ।। (KAIVALYA 11)

of meditation which is considered as most effective and most important i.e. the meditation on the single mystic syllable 'OM'. The churning of the mind to remove all the impurities is likened to the preliminaries for a fire sacrifice. In order to light the fire in the sacrificial platform (Vedi), A twin equipment consisting of two wooden planks, one up and one below, is used and by churning the lower one (arani) with the upper one, the fire is created which is used for kindling the fuel in the vedi. The chanting of 'OM', the single mystic syllable, will be considered like the upper wooden equipment for creating the ultimate fire of Jnana (Knowledge) and the Atman or the Self will be the lower portion where the fire of knowledge is kindled. Thus, by continuous chanting of 'OM' with constant attention towards the Self will create a fire which will burn away the bondage of ignorance so that the ultimate

power of Maya and experiences happiness, sorrow and miseries. Thus, the happiness and sorrow experienced in the waking state is as imaginary and unreal as in the dream state. In the sleeping state, the mind temporarily subsides and as a result, the world disappears and no objects exist. One is not even aware of his body, house, his wife or children sleeping by his side. He is not aware of his identity as assumed in the waking state and the dream state. Thus, though overcome by the ignorance of his real identity, he however, experiences a unique bliss and attains the Supreme happiness (though temporarily). The same individual soul again goes to sleep after having woken up as a result of the good and bad actions in the previous birth. This jeeva (individual soul), thus, plays in the three states of waking, dream and sleep assuming a gross or subtle body and thus gives rise to an immense

knowledge will be obtained as a result of this churning.

In the next 3 verses, the Upanishad describes as to how the Self gets deluded by the veiling power and the projective power of Maya and creates an illusory world both in the waking and dream state. One experiences an inordinate bliss in the sleeping state when he is overcome with the darkness of ignorance. Being deluded by the power of Maya, the Self resorts to various activities by taking up an imaginary body in the waking state and also finds some ephemeral happiness by the enjoyments of food, drinks, women etc. (all conceived by the imagination of Maya). As the waking state is also like a dream, the dreamer remains absolutely inactive and is only a witness to the imaginary dream. The same individual soul creates an imaginary world in the dream state by the same

expansion of the entire phenomenal world. All the three bodies (gross, subtle and causal) get dissolved in that undivided and ultimate knowledge, which is also the form of Absolute Bliss (Called the Supreme Self) and which is self effulgent. It is this Supreme soul which is the soul supporter base or substratum for this entire phenomenal world (Samsar). This Supreme Brahman is in actuality not different from the vital elan (Prana), the mind, all the senses of perception and action, space, fire, water and this very earth, which support the entire universe. The individual soul or the substratum of the entire universe remaining the biggest among the biggest and subtler than the subtlest, free from distractions appears in the form of all the objects. The aforesaid aspects of the ultimate Brahman, form a beautiful subject for meditation. When once we thoroughly understand and become convinced

not merely intellectually but from the core of our heart that we are that self-same Supreme Brahman who reveals the entire world consisting of the three states namely waking, dream and sleep, we get released from all the bondage instantaneously.

Contemplate always “I am the witness of all that takes place in the three worlds at all times. I am that pure form of the ultimate knowledge. I am thoroughly different from all the objects of enjoyment in the three worlds namely viz the Earth, the heaven and the interim world.”

One gets the experience of happiness and unhappiness through the various objects of enjoyment. These objects of enjoyment which are available in all the three worlds namely the earth, the heaven and the interim world, the mind that experiences those objects and the resultant experience of the happiness and unhappiness, all

naked eye. Similarly, I am the greatest as I remain in the form of the entire world of variegated objects. I am the most ancient Purusha (BEING) and the controller of all beings. I am always of the form of the ultimate good for all people, hence, this phenomenal world is completely different from me, the Self. As the Self, I possess neither hand nor feet, still I am capable of all actions because of the infinite power of a Self which can never be conceived/visualized by the mind. As the Atman, I possess neither the eyes nor the ear and as the Self I witness and hear everything. I am of the form of eternal knowledge and as such I know everything, while there is nobody in the world who can know me in my fullness. I am the subject worthy of knowing and also discussed in all the scriptures. I thoroughly know all the scriptures and it was I who authored the philosophy in the form of Brahmasutra

these which are perceived through our senses have all been superimposed on the Self through sheer imagination. “This entire phenomenal world was born out of my own imagination and remains established in Me, the Self. Hence, I the individual soul, am in actuality the Supreme Brahman alone who is second to none.” This is the feeling in which we should remain immersed.

One of the methods of meditation is to continuously think of the Brahman as one’s own Self. This method of continuous meditation of the Self with all the attributes of Brahman is called Brahmanusandhanam (continuous contemplation of Brahman). The subject of all the verses mentioned above and few more which are to follow will all be helpful for this contemplation of Brahman. “I, as the Self, am smaller than the smallest of atoms, as it is not easily visible to the

etc. I am neither subject to birth or death nor am I affected by any merit or sin. At no time I identify myself with my body and senses.”

Continuing the aforesaid method of meditation, you must contemplate that, “I am not of the form of basic elements viz, earth, water, fire, air and space.” Thus, by contemplating and knowing the form of Supreme Being who has his abode in the heart, devoid of any parts, being second to none, the witness of all and by the continuous contemplation on the Brahman, one obtains the form of that Supreme and pure Brahman who gives light and reveals all objects, bereft of any categorization as existant or non-existant.

The Upanishad ends with a narration of the fruits which accrue. A person who reads the portion of Vedas, termed as “Rudram” starting with the mantra “Namaste Rudramanyava”, such a person gets the

highest purity which accrues normally out of performance of "Agnihotra Sacrifices" or by the practice of breath control (Pranayam) and is freed from the worst of sins. He gets the same level of absolute purity which normally happens by the continuous contemplation of the Self or Atman. A man, who just chants once this Rudram or reads it both day and night gets that ultimate knowledge which dries up once and for all the ocean of the phenomenal world. As a result of that Jnana, this chanting of Rudram alone can lead us to the ultimate liberation which is obtained by the various methods of meditation enumerated earlier. [This method is an alternative to those who are unable to be convinced about the absolute Brahman and is available for those who are entitled to recite the scriptures (Vedas).]

Thus the Kaivalyopanishad has very briefly

described all types of meditation recommended in the rest of the scriptures from the Saguna (conditioned with attributes) to the formless. It follows that any more details or practical guide lines in the matter will have to be obtained from an eminent Master (Guru).



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KAIVALYOPANISHAD**

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*This Book is dedicated with veneration to
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whose spontaneous grace and compassion
have inebriated and inspired me to
venture into writing this book.*