

AN EXPLORATION OF THE IMPORTANCE OF KNOWLEDGE OF SELF AND WORLD FOR HAPPINESS IN MAITRI UPANISHAD

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Abstract

Maitri Upanishad belongs to the Yayur Veda. What is the good of the enjoyment of desires? Everything will end one day. Life revolves around birth, growth, decay and death. In Maitri Upanishad it is mentioned that Prajapati is the creator of this world. He creates this world for happiness. Initially he had no joy because he was alone. That is why he created this world by meditating himself for joy. In this paper I have explored what Maitri Upanishad teaches us about a happy life, how we can achieve a happy life and how much it is important to understand the self and the world for a happy life.

Keywords: morality, knowledge, good, society, happiness, value, virtue etc.

The Fivefold Breath: *Prajapati*, the creator of this world has divided himself into a fivefold breath viz. *Prana*, *Apana*, *Samana*, *Udana*, *Vyana*. These are called five kinds of breath. The breath which rises upwards is called *Prana*, the breath which moves downwards is called *Apana*. *Prana* and *Apana* breath is supported by *Vyana*. The breath by which *Prana* and *Apana* are supported is called *Vyana* breath. The breath which carries gross elements of food and distributes the subtle elements in each limb unto the *Apana* breath is called *Samana*. The breath which carries up and down which has been eaten and drunk is called *Udana*.

When Man thinks himself as body: Man considers himself a body. As a result of which he becomes subject to the senses. Being influenced by the sense organs, he becomes confused. And due to this confusion he cannot know his true nature. He cannot know the soul – the lord that dwells in him. Considering the body as everything and considering oneself as the doer, one becomes addicted to karma and enters the womb of good and evil; and is affected by the opposite.

The characteristics of quality that obstruct to know the self: In *Maitri Upanishad*, many types of characteristics of quality of darkness are mentioned; these are bewilderment, fear, depression, anger, ignorance, jealousy, cruelty, shamelessness, meanness etc. these characteristic of qualities keep us in darkness, and hinder us from following the right path. There are also some characteristics of the quality of passion such as lust, hatred, envy, attachment to pleasant objects etc. which also create obstacles to know the real self. With filled and affected by the characteristics of darkness and passion, one attains manifold forms.

The method to realize the self: What is the method or way to obtain the true nature of self? Due to attachment with the object one cannot remember the highest self which is residing in himself. The darkness of passion and attachment with the objects hinders the mind to know the true self. The antidote for coming out from this darkness is acquisition of knowledge of *veda* and performing one's own duty (*svadharma*). One should pursue his duties by understanding the stage of his life. Moreover one has

to practice austerity because by austerity goodness is obtained and from goodness, understanding arises; and understanding is the main cause of acquiring the true self. By knowledge, by austerity and by meditation, we can apprehend our true self i.e., Brahman. He who worships Brahman by these triad viz. knowledge, austerity and meditation, he obtains happiness, undecaying and becoming free from all kinds of sickness. He becomes freed from all characteristics of darkness and passion by which he was filled and affected earlier. He attains union with the true self. It is said in Maitri Upanishad that worshipping various gods is permissible but their rewards are temporary and cannot help us directly to become a *Brahma jnani*. The gods like *Brahma*, *Rudra*, and *Vishnu* etc. are the supreme forms of Brahman or Self. If one worships the gods, he will gain worldly joy, but cannot acquire the knowledge of Brahman and cannot attain unity with the Self.

The Tri-murtis: In *Maitri Upanishad*, it is described that the *Tri-murti* i.e., *Brahma*, *Vishnu* and *Shiva* are three forms to the Supreme Self or *Brahman*. This *murti-traya* is not different from each other, rather it is conceived that this three are the threefold manifestation of the *Brahman* – the true Self. He developed in unlimited parts, created beings, He moves about, having entered all beings. This concept is similar to Aristotle's concept of God, 'the unmoved mover.'

The power of Aum: Happiness comes by the Knowledge of *Brahman*. *Brahman* has two forms, one is formed and another is formless, and the formless is the real *Brahman*. *Brahman* is divided into threefold; the world is woven, warp and woof across Him. One should worship Him with the syllable *aum*, because it is holy and supreme. *Aum* is the sound form of the self. Fire, wind and sun are the light forms of *aum*. *Brahma*, *Rudra* and *Vishnu* are the lordship forms of *aum*. All the objects in this world are the form of *aum*.

That it said that by the utterance of syllable *aum*, all these forms are worshiped, praised and ascribed.

By the sound of *aum* one can reveal the non-sound *Brahmana*. It is said that as the spider moves upward by the thread and obtains free space. Similarly a mediator moving upward i.e. moving towards *Brahmana* by the syllable *aum* and attains happiness. The end of the syllable *aum* is tranquil, soundless, fearless, sorrow less, blissful, satisfied, immortal. Thinking is a fuel of action. If the thinking is good, the action will definitely be good. One's own thought is his *samsara* or world. A person becomes what he thinks. One can attain the serenity of happiness by the serenity of thought. The mind becomes happy when the stains of mind are washed by good thought.

Caring for nature: *Maitri Upanishad* teaches us that we should be conscious and care for nature, because nature gives us food. This world is created by food and subject to pleasure, pain and delusion. Every pain and pleasure is the manifestation of food. Life is made up of food. If one does not eat food, he cannot see anything, cannot do anything, and cannot hear anything, even he cannot breathe. So we can say that food is life. Food is the main component of life. Without food life is not possible. All the creatures of this earth produced from the food, lived by the food and will die in the food. Hence we should revere food as the self.

Two forms of Brahman: *Brahman* has two forms i.e. time and timeless. The timeless form is prior to the sun which is without parts. And another form begins with the sun. *Praja-pati* the formed Brahman is time, food and the abode of *Brahmana*. Time cooks (ripens) everything and he who knows what time is cooked, he is the knower of *veda*. All the good and evil comes from the time or sun, and Brahman is the self of sun. The rules or methods of achieving Brahman are control over breath and

senses, meditation, concentration, contemplative inquiry or *tarka* and absorption. This is called the yoga method of achieving *Brahmana*. It has been said that 'as beasts and birds do not resort to a burning mountain, so sins do not find shelter in those who know *Brahman*.' One can see the Brahman by the suppression of desire. One can see the *Brahmana* by the continuous meditation, by the serenity of thought one can destroy all kinds of deeds – good and evil and having the self through the self he becomes selfless, that means he knows the *Brahmana* - the origin of life. This is the mark of liberation, he who knows the *Barahman*, he can enjoy eternal happiness.

Vedas – the source of knowledge: In the *Maitri Upanishad* it is said that what is in the *Vedas* is the truth and knowledge. *Vedas* are the source of knowledge. *Veda* is said to be the expression of the mind of *Iswara*. The great self has a dual nature, form and formlessness. By living according to the teachings of *Vedas*, one can acquire the truth and find happiness in life. So the knowledge that is not in the *Vedas* should not be practiced. The doctrine which is not taught in the *Vedas* is for the demons. When the demons visit Brahma to learn about the self, *Brahma* teaches them different doctrines which are not the real and which are not in *Vedas*.

Conclusion

If we want to be happy, we have to understand what the meaning of life is. Life has birth, growth, decay and death. Life never stays the same. So to live a happy life we have to accept everything. Happiness is possible through acceptance. As our ability to accept increases, we move towards spiritual

consciousness. A person must be aware of his existence. He must know his true nature. The body is not everything; the soul that exists within the body must be realized. A person can attain a happy life only by realizing the supreme God who resides in the human soul as the doer of all actions. There are various obstacles in the way of knowing one's true nature such as bewilderment, fear, depression, anger, ignorance, jealousy, cruelty, shamelessness, meanness etc. The way to overcome those obstacles is to practice the knowledge of *Vedas* and *svadharmas*. Moreover the austerity and the meditation help to apprehend one's true self i.e., Brahman. We should be conscious and caring towards nature because it is from nature that we collect food which is necessary for our survival. Without food, our existence becomes impossible. So food should be revered as God. Acknowledgement: I am very grateful to the author and publisher of the book *The Principal Upanishads*. I have collected most of the information and knowledge from this book for writing this paper.

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