

Prasna Upanishad

Transliterated Sanskrit Text

Free Translation

&

Brief Explanation

By

T.N.Sethumadhavan

Published

In

Esamskriti.com

15th July, 2011

Guru Purnima

Nagpur

tnsethumadhavan@gmail.com

Prasna Upanishad (Part-1):
Origin of Created Beings
T.N.Sethumadhavan

PREAMBLE

Professor Max Muller has said: “The Upanishads are the sources of the Vedanta philosophy, a system in which human speculation seems to have reached its very pinnacle. They are to me like light of the morning, like the pure air of the mountain – so simple, so true, if once understood”.

Some modern thinkers have said that Vedanta is the only scientific approach to the religion which everybody of this civilization can accept and that in fact it is the future of all religions.

The important point to note is that the words of the Upanishads cannot be understood in terms of their literal meanings or laboratory definitions. We have to discover their meanings hidden in their terse language which inevitably involves repetitions and winding explanations. Then only the purport of the *mantras* in the Upanishads will be simple to understand as Prof. Max Muller remarked. This policy of secretiveness of the Sruti texts prescribes the Vedanta Sadhana. Every passage of the Sruti is to be reflected upon to get a clear understanding.

This scientific approach of Vedanta is the basis of the *Prasna Upanishad* where the teacher and the students are engaged in an enquiry into the nature of the universe. This Upanishad leads the inquirer from the known to the unknown, from the manifest to the unmanifest, from the grossly material to the supremely subtle (the Absolute, Brahman). It proves that despite the fact that Brahman pervades the entire universe, we cannot see it because our mind introduces a bias in our very act of perception.

The Prasna Upanishad comes from the *Brahmana* portion of the *Atharva Veda* belonging to *Pippaladasakha*. It has 67 *mantras* spread over 6 chapters. Since the Upanishad is in the form of *prasnas* or questions and their answers, it has been named as *Prasnopanishad*. It discusses more elaborately some topics dealt with briefly in the *Mundakopanishad* and hence it is considered as a commentary on that Upanishad. Much of the Mundaka is in verse, only a few passages being in prose. The Prasna is just the opposite.

Once upon a time six learned students came to the great teacher Pippalada and after observing the disciplines of student-hood for one year as per the teacher’s instructions they approached him again with the following six questions.

1. What is the origin of all created beings?
2. Who protects and guards created beings and who among them is supreme? This relates to the constituents of human personality.

3. How does the Chaitanya (*Prana*) enter the body and get diverted into five channels? How does it leave the body? How does it sustain the universe without and within? This refers to the nature and origin of *Prana*.
4. Which are the senses that operate in the three stages - the waking, dreaming and sleeping? Who is that in whom all these are established? This is about the psychological aspect of the human personality.
5. What is the result of worshipping *Om* throughout one's life? This is about *Pranava Upasana*.
6. Where is that Supreme Being, the Person of sixteen forms? This relates to the metaphysical principle in man.

The answers provided by Pippalada to these questions form the main body of this text. They take the student gradually from the gross to the subtle principles of life, revealing one by one all the fields of Matter that enwrap the Atman (Spirit). In this Upanishad alone we find a clear mention being made of the creation originating from Matter and Energy. It shows that what is outside is also inside. What is outside is the macrocosm. The same thing within us is the microcosm. We and the Infinite Being are one and the same. That is the conclusion of this Upanishad and that is Non-dualism, Advaita.

PEACE INVOCATION

*Om bhadram karnebhih shrinuyaama devaa
 bhadram pashhyemaakshabhiryajatraah
 sthirairangaistushhtuvaam sastanuubhirvyashema devahitam yadaayuh
 svasti na indro vriddhashravaah
 svasti nah puushhaa vishvavedaah .
 svasti nastaarkshyo arishhtanemih
 svasti no brihaspatirdadhaatu ..
 Om shaantih shaantih shaantih..*

Om, O Gods, May we hear auspicious words with our ears,
 O Worshipful One, May we see auspicious things with our eyes,
 May we live our entire life cheerfully in perfect health and strength offering our
 praises unto thee,
 May *Indra*, the ancient and the famous, bless us,
 May *Pushan* (Sun), the all-knowing bless us,
 May *Vayu* (Life Principle), the Lord of swift motion who protects us
 from all harms, bless us,
 May *Brihaspati*, the Lord of wisdom, bless us all.

Om Peace! Peace! Peace!

THE TEXT

FIRST QUESTION

Mantra 1

*om sukeshaa cha bhaaradvaajah shaibyashcha satyakaamah sauryaayanii cha gaargyah
kausalyashchaashvalaayano bhaargavo vaidarbhih kabandhii kaatyayaanaste haite
brahmaparaa brahmanishhthaah param brahmaanveshhamaanaa esha ha vai
tatsarvam vakshyatiiti te ha samitpaanayo bhagavantam pippalaadamupasannaah || 1||*

Om. Sukesha, the son of Bharadvaja, Satyakama, the son of Sibi, Sauryayani, belonging to the family of Garga, Kausalya, the son of Asvala, Bhargava, the son of Bhrigu of Vidarbha, and Kabandhi, the son of Katya - all these, devoted to Brahman and firm in Brahman and seeking the supreme Brahman, approached, fuel in hand, the venerable Pippalada with the thought that he would tell them everything about Brahman.

The Upanishad starts with the story of six young men who are devoted to Brahman, who are greatly attached to Brahman and who are in search of the Supreme Brahman. They are yearning for Brahman and approached the venerable teacher Pippalada. The historicity or geographical location of the names of the people and places are not material; what are important are the teachings.

These students already knew about Saguna Brahman or Brahman with qualities (Apara Brahman). Now they want to know about Supreme Brahman, Brahman without qualities (Para Brahman). According to then existing tradition they carried firewood in their hands and went to the teacher Pippalada who is described as Bhagavan because of his very high good qualities. An offering of firewood to a teacher is a symbol of respect, humility and keenness to learn on the part of a student.

The need of faith, austerity and chastity of body and mind for spiritual knowledge is emphasized.

Mantra 2

*tan.h ha sa rishhiruvacha bhuyaya eva tapasaa brahmacharyena shraddhayaa
sa.nvatsaram sa.nvatsyatha yathaakaamam prashnaan.h prichchhata yadi
vijnaasyaamah sarvam ha vo vakshyaama iti || 2||*

The sage told them: Stay with me for a whole year, practicing austerities, continence and faith. Then ask me whatever questions you like. If I know them, assuredly, I shall tell everything to you.

The gift of Self-Knowledge is the highest. It is supreme. Pippalada wanted to see the students better qualified to receive it. Hence he suggested that they stay there practicing austerities, self-control and showing due respect and reverence to the teacher and

scriptures which is termed faith here. These are the qualities essentially needed in spiritual life. The purpose of this mantra is to show that the teacher must be endowed with humility and knowledge while the pupil should have faith and self-control.

Kabandhi returns after a year and asks the first question.

Mantra 3

atha kabandhii katyaayana upetya paprachchha | bhagavan.h kuto ha vaa imaah prajaah prajaayanta iti || 3||

Then Kabandhi, the son of Katya, came to Pippalada and asked, Sir, where do all these beings come from?

It may be noted that the students wanted to learn about the Supreme Reality, Para Brahman but started with a question on *jivas* or beings, the phenomenal world of existence. This is because they are already aware of *Saguna Brahman* (Brahman with attributes or *apara vidya*) but knew nothing about *Nirguna Brahman* (Brahman without attributes or *para vidya*). In other words they know about the Supreme Being in its manifest reality in the forms of *jiva* and *jagat* and not in its Unmanifest Absoluteness, *Jagadishvara*. With the teacher's guidance step by step the students will realize the unreality of this phenomenal world and find out that the Para Brahman alone is real.

CREATION DESCRIBED

Mantra 4

tasmai sa hovaacha prajaakaamo vai prajaapatih sa tapo.atapyata sa tapastaptvaa sa mithunamutpaadayate | rayim cha pranam chetyetau me bahudhaa prajaah karishhyata iti || 4||

To him the teacher said: Prajapati, the Creator, was desirous of progeny. With this in view, he performed austerities and having performed austerities, created the pair, the Matter (*Rayi*) and the Energy (*Prana*) thinking that together they would produce creatures in many ways.

The word Prajapati means the Lord or Father of all that exists. He is not the Supreme Being. It is just like a designation in an organization, a post to which someone is promoted. Prajapati is also called Hiranyagarbha or Brahma (not to be confused with *Brahman*).

According to Vedanta, everything, including Prajapati comes from Brahman or projected from Brahman. Brahman does not create anything because he is *nirguna* and *nirakara*, without qualities and without form. So Prajapati is one step down the line.

Vedanta says that this universe is a manifestation, a projection. It is not a creation like a potter making a pot. This universe is projected from Prajapati and again it is withdrawn

back unto him. Prajapati just contemplates and from that contemplation a pair, the moon, the Matter (*Rayi*) and the sun, the Energy (*Prana*) are projected from himself.

Prajapati or Hiranyagarbha, the cosmic mind, first created out of himself the moon (*Rayi*, Matter) and the sun (*Prana*, Energy) which produce in turn all the varieties of the universe.

What Pippalada means is that ‘The Lord of beings meditated and produced Prana, the primal energy, and Rayi, the giver of form, desiring that they, male and female, should in manifold ways produce creatures for him’.

The first thing that occurred was the manifestation of Prana and Rayi - energy and matter that manifest as form. There are many levels of manifestation, and Pippalada is only speaking of the lower worlds which are manifested by Brahman.

Prana and Rayi are the two poles of manifesting energy - positive and negative, male and female. This duality is at the heart of all that presently exists, and without it everything dissolves. Prana and Rayi are the “parents” of all things. Creation is their perpetual interaction. All “creatures” - all that exist in relativity - have sprung from Prana and Rayi.

The relationship between matter and energy is that of a musical instrument and music. Without the instrument the music is impossible but the instrument as such is nothing but a heap of wooden and steel materials. Similarly matter is the equipment and energy is the music that can be produced out of it. The Cosmic Mind felt that these two would multiply among themselves into many and thus the whole creation is thought-projection of the Cosmic Mind.

The teacher says that Prajapati created a duality which is also the source of maintenance of the continuity of created things. Man too creates his world with thought and maintains it with duality. Pippalada says that Prajapati created a duality of Matter and Life (Energy), of Rayi and Prana. The creation moves and maintains its continuity by an interaction of these dual principles.

MATTER & ENERGY EXPLAINED FURTHER

Mantra 5

*aadityo ha vai praano rayireva chandramaa rayirvaa etat.h sarvam yanmuurtam
chaamuurtam cha tasmaanmuurtireva rayih || 5||*

The sun is, indeed, Prana, life, Energy; the moon is Rayi, food, Matter. All that have form (gross) and all that is formless (subtle) is Matter and therefore anything having a form is indeed Matter.

Prana (sun) means the primal energy which makes the matter, Rayi (moon), exist and function. Science also says that sun is the source of all energy in this universe. If the sun is the source of all energy and life, the moon, which is the matter and which reflects the

sun's light is the fit medium for energy to manifest through. Thus matter is dependent on life for its existence even as the moon is dependent on the sun. (Note-This aspect is taken up for further scrutiny in the 2nd question).

We have to note here that matter does not mean only solid things which have form but includes even those which do not have forms like all our thoughts and ideas, sound waves, air, water etc. These are subtler planes of existence up to Intellectual and Atomic planes. The structure of even the subtlest planes of existence is matter according to the vast definition given to it in this Upanishad. Hence matter may exist from the grossest to the subtlest.

Just as links in a golden chain are also nothing but gold, the thoughts and ideas of our mind and intellect which are moulded by the objects and happenings of the outside world cannot but be anything other than the outside world. Just as the formless outside world is governed by the forms of the outside world the formless inner world of ours is nothing other than the form world outside. Hence the Rishi says that the form is indeed matter. From this standpoint, a thought form or sound form is nothing but matter, however beautiful they may be. A form, just because it is subtle, cannot become life.

Sun is the energy aspect which meets the world of forms outside and formless world within. The moon is the presiding deity of the matter without and within. Thus our life, both within and without, is nothing but a play of the sun and the moon as defined in this *mantra*.

This entire universe, that which is gross and that which is subtle, is one with Rayi. Therefore is Rayi omnipresent. In like manner is the universe one with Prana. Nothing can exist without duality - Prana and Rayi - at the root of their manifestation, and they are still being maintained by them. The sages knew from the beginning that the sun and moon were essential even for plant life. All "things" are the embodiment of Prana and Rayi. The universe is *Prana* and Rayi. Spirit - Paramatman and Atman - alone is independent of these two, and untouched by them.

This can be better expressed in an equation as under.

ALL MATTER = THE MOON
ALL ENERGY = THE SUN
PRAJAPATI = BOTH MATTER & ENERGY
THEREFORE PRAJAPATI INDICATES BOTH THE SUN AND THE MOON.

THUS PRAJAPATI BECOMES EVERYTHING IN US EXCEPT THE ATMAN. THIS IS WHAT THIS MANTRA WANTS US TO UNDERSTAND.

Mantra 6

*athaaditya udayanyatpraachiim disham pravishati tena praachyaan.h praanaan.h
rashmishhu sannidhatte | yaddakshinaam yat.h pratiichiim yadudiichiim yadadho
yaduurdhvam yadantaraa disho yat.h sarvam prakaashayati tena sarvaan.h praanaan.h
rashmishhu sannidhatte || 6||*

Now the sun, when it rises, enters the eastern quarter and thereby enfolds the living beings of the east in its rays. And when it illuminates the southern, the western, the northern, the lower, the upper and the intermediate quarters—when it illuminates everything - it thus enfolds all living beings in its rays.

In this mantra the sage tells us that the sun is the representative of the pranas and the moon, the deity of matter. At the touch of each, the living creatures behave differently. Human beings, animal kingdom and plant life behave differently at the touch of the rays of the sun and the moon. Just as the one sun can be reflected in numerous ways, so Prana enlivens all things and moves within them. The life even in an atom is Cosmic Life.

Mantra 7 - 8

sa eshha vaishvaanaro vishvarupah praano.agnirudayate|tadetadrichaa.abhyuktam.h||7||

*vishvaruupam harinam jaatavedasam
paraayanam jyotirekam tapantam.h/
sahasrarashmih shataadhaa vartamaanah
praanah prajaanaamudayatyeshha suuryah||8||*

That sun is *vaisvanara* or one who is identified with all living beings. He is *visvarupa* or one who assumes all forms. It rises everyday as Prana (life) and Agni (fire, energy). This has been described in the following mantra of RigVeda. “The thousand rayed sun exists in hundreds of forms as life of all living beings. It is resplendent, all-knowing, goal of all, sole light and giver of energy”.

These mantras give us a bird’s eye view of the sun as a prime-mover of the goings-on in the universe. The sun is glorified as the nourisher of all life, the illuminator of all forms of matter and the provider of energy for sustenance of life as well as matter. The sun is the sum-total of all waking state egos in the world. All the waking state activities, experiences and thoughts of the world take place because of the energy produced by the sun.

The waking state gross-body consciousness we have individually, if viewed from the point of totality of the universe, is called *vaisvanara* which is identified with the sun. The term *visvarupa* means assuming all forms. Here it means that the sun with its light-giving-energy principle is the cause for perception of all forms seen by the eye and hence the sun is stated to assume all forms. Prana (life) and Agni (fire) which represent the sun indicate the feeling of warmth and the body warmth is the icon of life living in it. Pippalada says that this picturisation of the sun is supported by the Rig Veda mantra which says, “The thousand rayed sun exists in hundreds of forms as life of all living beings. It is resplendent, all-knowing, goal of all, sole light and giver of energy”. The statement of the Sruti covers the sun in its macrocosmic and microcosmic aspects of existence and functioning.

The mantras 7 and 8 discussed above indicate that the sun is not merely a physical planet to be observed and researched but it is liveliness itself expressing through the activities of all matter. Hence it is considered as “life of all creations”.

In fact, the sun (Surya) is considered Brahman itself in the *Suryopanishad* occurring in the *Atharva Veda* as the following mantra tells us.

*aadityaadvaayurjaayate aadityaadbhuumirjaayate
aadityaadaapojaayante aadityaajjyotirjaayate
aadityaadvyoma disho jaayante aadityaaddevaa jaayante
aadityaadvedaa jaayante
aadityo vaa eshha etanmandalan tapati asaavaadityo brahma*

From *Aditya* is born air, earth, water, fire, sky, directions, Devas, Vedas; indeed the Sun gives warmth to this sphere (Planet) ; **that Sun God is Brahman,**

TIME REPRESENTED BY THE YEAR IS INDEED THE LORD OF CREATION, PRAJAPATI

Mantra 9

*sa.nvatsaro vai prajaapatistasyaayane dakshinam chottaram cha | tadye ha vai
tadishhtaapuurte kritamityupaasate te chaandramasameva lokamabhijayante | ta eva
punaraavartante tasmaadeta rishhayah prajaakaamaa dakshinam pratipadyante | eshha
ha vai rayiryah pitriyaanah || 9||*

The year is indeed Prajapati and there are two paths thereof: the Southern and the Northern. Those who follow the path of Karma alone by the performance of sacrificial and pious acts obtain only the World of the Moon and certainly they do return. Therefore those sages who desire offspring travel by the Southern Path. The matter (Rayi) is verily the path of the Forefathers.

Mantra 10

*athottarena tapasaa brahmacharyena shraddhayaa vidyayaa.a.
atmaanamanvishhyaadityamabhijayante| etadvai praanaanaamaa yatanametad
amritamabhayametad.h paraayanametasmaanna punaraavartanta ityeshha
nirodhastadeshha shloka || 10||*

But those who seek the Self through austerity, chastity, faith and knowledge, travel by the Northern Path and gain the Sun. The Sun, verily, is the goal of all living creatures, the Immortal, the Fearless; this is the final goal. From there they do not return, for, this is the end. For this there is a mantra.

The concepts of space and time were always an enigma to the fiction writers, scientists, philosophers and sages since long. In the Bhagavad Gita Bhagavan Sri Krishna says that He is “*kaalah kalayataamaham*” (10.30); He is Time - Time is an Eternal Factor which

is divided into past, present and future by the play of mind and intellect. The Lord is thus an Infinite Substratum supporting the finite multiplicity.

In the modern period research on the planet sun and time is being carried on by several scientists and it is brought within the understanding of the common people like the work "A Briefer History of Time" by Stephen Hawking and Leonard Mlodinow. H.G.Wells, the famous author of the science fiction novel "The Time Machine" published in 1895 which was later adopted for feature films and television versions introduced the idea of time being the "fourth dimension", the other three being length, breadth and thickness of objects.

We have seen in the previous mantras the glorification of the sun. Now the importance of the Time which is measured with reference to the Sun is emphasized by calling it Prajapati itself. The teacher says that Creation is synonymous with time, for time is the field in which creation can operate. Time is essentially a movement in duality, a movement from one to the other. Where there is no duality, there time too is not. A movement between two points of duality is indeed the stream of time. And so when the creator created duality, He thereby brought into existence the movement of Time. Hence this mantra says the Lord of Creation (Prajapati) is indeed the time of the year, a unit of time taken by the earth to go round the sun once.

All these imply that duality is the very basis of creation which exists in everything in the universe even in the flow of Time. For example a year has the duality of sun moving in northern and southern hemispheres; a year also has the duality of solar and lunar months; a month has the duality of bright and dark fortnights; a day of the week has the duality of day and night.

Prajapati manifests Himslef as the pair, the sun and the moon and the pair constitutes the year. Therefore, the year or Time is none other than Prajapati, as according to Vedanta the cause is non-different from the effect.

The duality of a year is equated with two types of life-styles viz., one devoted to legitimate pursuit of material pleasures and the other to spiritual pursuits. The former is said to perform two types of work – *ishta* and *purti*. *Ishta* refers to the daily obligatory duties and *purti* refers to the special services done for public welfare such as digging of wells, construction of *dharmashalas* etc. The Upanishad says that these people go to the world of ancestors (*Pitrayana*, the Southern path), symbolized by moon and then to rebirth. The latter type of people goes to a state of liberation, symbolized by sun (*Devayana*, the Northern path). The former is equated with matter and the latter with life.

This is also discussed in the Bhagavad Gita 8.24 & 25.

Special emphasis is laid on the discipline, Brahmacharya, chastity of the body and the mind for the higher spiritual perceptions. The thrust of these two mantras is to point out that the year indeed is Prajapati and as such the sun aspect and the moon aspect in the

year are shown as the two paths which in time everybody has to pass through after death. This is supported by a Vedic mantra as under.

DESCRIPTION OF THE SUN

Mantra 11

*pajncapaadam pitaram dvaadashaakritim
diva aahuh pare ardhe puriishhinam.h |
atheme anya u pare vichakshanam
saptachakre shhadara aahurarpitamiti || 11||*

Some call Him the father with five feet and with twelve forms, the giver of rain and the dweller in the region above the sky. Others, again, say that the Sun is omniscient; the one upon whom like a chariot drawn by seven horses running on a wheel with six spokes, the whole world is founded.

This mantra glorifies the sun as the father of all, the provider of life-sustaining rains, and the all-knowing support of the universe. It describes the sun as the Lord of Time, comparing him to a benevolent five-footed master moving along the top of the world, each foot representing a season and twelve forms standing for twelve months of the year. Although we accept six seasons for a year, here *Hemanta* and *Sisira* seasons have been considered together as one.

As a man walks with the help of his feet, the sun by means of the seasons moves along the orbit. The sun is also compared to a chariot drawn by seven horses, corresponding to seven colors of light, and moving on the wheel of Time with six spokes symbolizing six seasons.

The gist of the mantra is that Prajapati manifesting himself as the sun and the moon, next as Time or the year, further manifests himself as the universe. This verse occurs in Rig Veda I.clxiv.12.

Mantra 12

*maaso vai prajaapatistasya krishhnapaksha eva rayih shuklah pranastasmaadete
rishhayah shukla ishhtam kurvantiitara itarasmin.h || 12||*

The month, verily, is Prajapati. Its dark half, verily, is food, Rayi (matter); its bright half, the eater, Prana (energy). Therefore some Rishis perform sacrifice in the bright half of the month, but some perform them in the dark half.

Continuing on the existence of duality in Time, this mantra equates dark fortnight (*krishna paksha*) with Matter or food and bright fortnight (*shukla paksha*) with life or eater of the food.

The month is characterized by the bright and dark fortnights of the moon. The reference to the Sages who perform sacrifices in the bright fortnight indicates those who see everything to be pervaded by prana. The others who perform them in the dark fortnight refer to those who do not see prana as the cause of everything.

Though prana is associated with the bright fortnight of the moon, yet to the Rishis of superior wisdom, prana pervades the entire month. They see everything to be bright; to them krishna paksha is as good as the shukla paksha. Therefore even when they perform sacrifices in the dark fortnight, they reap the benefit as if it were performed in the bright fortnight.

On the other hand those of lesser wisdom do not see prana in everything; even though they perform sacrifices in the bright fortnight they do not reap the corresponding result.

The purpose of this mantra is to praise the knowledge of prana as pervading the entire month, the month being the symbol of time.

Mantras 13 -16 touch upon some practical aspects of human birth, like when to make love and how many children to have? Mantra 14 glorifies food by calling it Prajapati and implies that quality of food eaten by a man influences the genes in his children. Mantras 15 and 16 commend a code of conduct for married couples.

Mantra 13

*ahoraatro vai prajaapatistasyaahareva praano raatireva rayih praanam vaa ete
praskandanti ye divaa ratyaa sa.nyujoyante brahmacharyameva tadyadraatrau ratyaa
sa.nyujoyante || 13||*

Day and night, verily, are Prajapati. Of these, day is the life, Prana and night, the matter, Rayi. Those who join in sexual enjoyment by day verily waste their life; while those who do so during the night are to be considered celibate (Brahmachari).

Prajapati further manifests himself as day which is prana, energy and the night which is rayi, matter. Those who indulge in sense pleasure during the day, which is the time for hard work, really waste their own life. This mantra visualizes that there is some appropriate time for every type of activity, be it worldly or spiritual. It means that this kind of self-control is as good as celibacy.

Mantra 14

annam vai prajaapatistato ha vai tadretastasmaadimaah prajaah prajaayanta iti || 14||

Food, verily, is Prajapati. From that comes semen; from semen are all these creatures born.

In answer to the question regarding the origin of created beings, the biological explanations of life is given in this mantra. Before this, the teacher had described the various stages through which Prajapati himself had seemingly passed through to become the pluralistic world.

These stages of manifestation of Prajapati are as follows:

PRAJAPATI → MATTER & ENERGY → TIME → YEAR AND ITS SUBDIVISIONS SUCH AS MONTH, DAY ETC. → FOOD → SEMEN → CREATED BEINGS.

But the irony is that we do not realize that we are Prajapati.

Life is present in all stages of creation, though the tangible form of manifestation is seen in living creatures. The description of Northern and Southern Paths shows that the present life is not the first life of the embodied soul and that life is without beginning and so too the embodied soul. Existing from a beginningless past the soul passes through one cycle after another and obtains Liberation only through knowledge of its identity with Brahman. Thus creation is but a delusion of the mind and there is nothing that has really risen up from the Eternal Reality.

THE FRUIT OF A WELL DISCIPLINED LIFE

Mantra 15

*tadye ha vai tat.h prajaapativratam charanti te mithunamutpaadayante |
teshhaamevaishha brahmaloko yeshhaam tapo brahmacharyam yeshhu satyam
pratishhtitam.h || 15||*

Those, therefore, who observe this rule of Prajapati beget a pair. But Brahmaloka belongs to those who observe austerity and chastity and in whom truth is firmly established.

Referring to the householders who follow the restraints regarding healthy moral habits about observing self-discipline, who practice austerity, abstinence, and truthfulness, who follow the example of Prajapati, this mantra says that they will beget a pair i.e. a son and a daughter and that Brahmaloka is for such people alone from where they return to earth after exhaustion of their merits.

Mantra 16

teshhaamasau virajo brahmaloko na yeshhu jihmamanritam na maayaa cheti || 16||

The pure Brahmaloka belongs to those in whom there is no crookedness, no falsehood, and no deception.

Such Brahmaloka belongs to them alone who are free from deceit, hypocrisy and pride. Taking together the previous mantra, this mantra provides an ideal scheme of living wherein both worldly and spiritual progress can be achieved. Regular meditation,

intelligent self-control, a spirit of truthfulness, avoidance of crookedness and falsehood and hypocrisy are sure to take any spiritual seeker stage by stage up the ladder of enlightenment. This Brahmaloaka is not be confused with Liberation. Liberation can be attained by those who take to the path of renunciation.

It is interesting to note that there is no mention here of performing any special rituals nor is there any mention of worshipping a certain deity. We are not asked to pray or to repeat any mantras. We are simply told to be pure, honest and straightforward. Swami Vivekananda therefore stated that religion is in being and becoming pure and spotless.

CONCLUSION

The question that we started with was “Where did all these beings come from?” The answer given by the teacher was that all the created beings have originated from Prajapati who manifested himself into many. The many objects we observe in the universe are all really one, which can be classified into two viz. the cause and the effect, Prana and Rayi, life and sustenance of life and the food and its eater. This apparent duality is the visible characteristic of the world which we are able to observe and experience.

iti prashnopanishhadi prathamah prashnah //

HERE ENDS THE FIRST QUESTION OF THE PRASNA UPANISHAD

We shall take up the Second Question next time.

HARIH OM

Prasna Upanishad (Part-2):
Who Supports the Created Beings?
T.N.Sethumadhavan

PREAMBLE

In the previous section we have seen that the pluralistic world of things and beings has risen from *Prajapati* who manifested himself as *prana*, energy and *rayi*, matter. This section explains how the *prana* is acting within the body; how the physical being is kept united and integrated. It elucidates the activities of the body through which the individuals gain the worldly experience, the sum total of which goes by the name 'life', life being nothing but the series of experiences. In order to gain these experiences we have instruments of knowledge called sense organs and instruments of action in the body. These two sets of instruments are fully supported by our mind and intellect. Here the student inquires about the nature of the phenomenal factors or presiding deities in Vedantic terminology in the physical structure of the bodies.

THE TEXT

SECOND QUESTION

Mantra 1

*atha hainam bhaargavo vaidarbhih paprachchha / bhagavan.h katyeva devaah prajaam
vidhaarayante katara etat.h prakashayante kah punareshhaam varishhtha iti || 1 ||*

Then Bhargava of Vidarbha, asked him (Pippalada): Sir, how many Devas support the created being? How many of these manifest their power through it? And which one among them is paramount?

Here the word Deva means faculty or that which illumines or reveals. The inquiry is what the instruments of knowledge and actions are and who are the Devas that support them in the body. The body cannot function without the sense organs and the organs of action. The tangible physical organs of perception or action are made of matter and hence they are inert. By themselves they cannot function. The Upanishad says that each such organ is presided over by a deity (Deva) that is by an aspect of Consciousness. Consciousness energizes the instruments of perception and action and makes them functional. The question is therefore specific as to what Devas exactly enlighten these instruments.

It must be noted that each of the instruments is so made as to illumine or perceive only a given type of objects and so each must have distinctly different controller governing it and at the same time there must be a synchronizing observer to co-ordinate various observations. This superior observer gathers information through these different outposts and come to experience the totality of all. The student's question "who among them is paramount" relates to that one experienter.

Mantra 2

*tasmai sa hovaacha akaasha ha vaa eshha devo vaayur agnir aapah prithivii
vaanmanash chakshuh shrotram cha | te prakaashyaabhivadanti vayametad baanam
avashhtabhya vidhaarayaamah || 2 ||*

To the disciple he replied: These Devas are verily Space, akasa, – the Air, fire, water, earth, speech, mind, eye and ear, as well. These, having manifested their glory, said boastfully: "We support this body and uphold it".

The teacher replied that the factors that support the body are the instruments of knowledge and instruments of action presided over by the mind. Now it is hinted that these instruments are all governed by the five great elements or in the Vedantic terminology they are all presided over each by a Devata called 'Dik' which means quarters or space. Consciousness permeates all the matter; all elements and organs are controlled by a portion of Consciousness called a Deva. Body is the effect and the organs are the cause; the gross is the effect but the subtle is the cause. Body is the aggregate of the cause and effect. This will be clearer if we reflect that the body is not the sum of the organs or parts.

This concept is explained in detail in the Tables below.

1 VEDANTIC ANATOMY OF THE HUMAN BODY

SARIRA TRAYA: THE THREE BODIES		
Sthula Sarira or Gross Body	Sukshma Sarira or Linga Sarira or Subtle Body	Karana Sarira or Causal Body

2 STHULA SARIRA (GROSS BODY)

CONSISTS OF PANCHA MAHABHUTAS (FIVE GREAT ELEMENTS)

PANCHA MAHABHUTAS: FIVE GREAT ELEMENTS			
NO.	NAME	QUALITY	CHARACTERISTICS
1	Akasa Space or Ether	Sabda or Sound	Can only be heard. Cannot be seen, smelt, felt or tasted
2	Vayu or Air	Sparsha or Touch	Can be heard & felt by touch. Cannot be smelt, seen or tasted
3	Tejas Or Agni or Fire	Rupa or Form	Can be seen, heard & felt. Cannot be smelt or tasted
4	Apah or Water	Rasa or Taste	Can be seen, heard, felt & tasted. Cannot be smelt
5	Prithvi or Earth	Gandha or Smell	Can be seen, tasted, felt, heard and smelt

3 FIVE JNANENDRIYAS: ORGANS OF PERCEPTION

NO.	NAME	FIELDS OF EXPERIENCE	DIG DEVATA OR PRESIDING DEITIES	CORRESPONDING MAHABHUTA
1	Srotra or Ear	Sabda or Reception of Sound	Akasha or Space	Akasa Space or Ether
2	Tvacha or Skin	Sparsha or Cognition of Touch	Vayu or Air	Vayu or Air
3	Chakshu or Eyes	Roopa or Perception of Forms	Surya or Sun	Tejas Or Agni or Fire
4	Jihva or Tongue	Rasa or Cognition of Taste	Varuna or Water	Apah or Water
5	Ghraana or Nose	Gandha or Cognition of Smell	Aswini Kumars - Twins	Prithvi or Earth

4 FIVE KARMENDRIYAS: ORGANS OF ACTION

NO.	NAME	FIELDS OF EXPERIENCE	PRESIDING DEITIES
1	Vaak or Speech	Bhasanam or To Speak	Agni or Fire
2	Paani or Hands	Vastu Grahanam or To grasp things	Indra or Lord Indra
3	Paada or Legs	Gamanam or Locomotion	Vishnu or Lord Vishnu
4	Paayu or Anus	Maalatyaaga or Elimination of waste	Mrityu or Lord Yama
5	Upastha or Genitals	Ananda or Pleasure & Procreation	Prajapati or Prajapati

5 SUKSHMA SARIRA OR LINGA SARIRA OR SUBTLE BODY CONSISTS OF 17 COMPONENTS AS GIVEN BELOW

Pancha Jnanendriyas or Five organs of Perception	Pancha Karmendriyas or Five organs of Action	Pancha Pranas or Five types of Breaths	Manas or Mind	Buddhi or Intellect
--	--	--	---------------	---------------------

6 KARANA SARIRA OR CAUSAL BODY CONSISTS OF VASANAS OR IMPRESSIONS (INHERENT TENDENCIES)

These Devas or the various organs of the body started a controversy among themselves each claiming that it alone supports the body and that without it the body will disintegrate and collapse.

Mantra 3

taan.h varishhthah praana uvaacha | maa mohamaapadyatha aham evaitat.h pajnchadhaa.a.atmaanam pravibhajya etadbaanam avashhtabhya vidhaarayaami iti te ashreddadhaanaa babhuuvuh || 3 ||

To them Prana, the chief most said: "Do not fall into delusion. I alone, dividing myself into five parts, support this body and uphold it." But they were incredulous.

Prana, the Chief, in its sense as life-breath, told the organs: 'Do not boast like that. I divide myself into five different powers and use them to keep the body going. I am responsible for its maintenance'. When the sense organs did not believe this statement, Prana protested and warned them of their delusion and told them that it alone by dividing itself into five parts supports the body. These five parts and their functions and locations in the body are given the following table. Through these five functions, Prana controls all our physical movements and makes our activities possible.

PANCHA PRANAS OR THE FIVE VITAL AIRS

NO.	NAME	FUNCTIONS	LOCATED IN
1	Prana	Respiration – inhaling & exhaling.	Nose
2	Apana	Evacuation or Excretion of wastes	Anus & Genitals
3	Vyana	Circulation - pervades the nerves of the body	Entire Body
4	Udana	Reaction or Pushing Upwards - maintains heat in the body.	Throat
5	Samana	Assimilation or Digestion of food.	Central Region of the Body

Mantra 4

so.abhimaanaaduurdhvam utkraamata iva tasminnutkraamaty athetare sarva evotkraamante tasminshcha pratishhthamaane sarva eva pratishhthante | tadyathaa makshikaa madhukara raajaanam utkraamantam sarva evotkramante tasminshhcha pratshhthamaane sarva eva pratishhtanta evam.h vaanmanashhchakshuh shrotram cha te priitaah praana.n stunvanti || 4 ||

Prana, got irritated, pretended as if it was going to rise, as it were, leaving from the body. Now, when it started to leave, the other organs followed suit. When it settled down they all settled down with it. As bees go out when their queen goes out and return when she returns, even so did speech, mind, eye, ear and the rest. They, being satisfied, praised Prana.

Prana got offended by the disregard shown to it by the other sense organs. In order to teach them a lesson it pretended to leave the body. As soon as Prana made a gesture of

leaving the body, all the organs followed it and when Prana settled back they also did the same. The Upanishad compares this episode to a queen bee. When the queen leaves the bee-hive, all the other bees follow her. She is their leader and without her they cannot function being dependent on her. In the same way, all other organs are dependent on Prana without whom they cannot serve any purpose. So the organs were humbled and realized Prana's superiority and began to praise it.

PRAISE OF PRANA

Mantra 5

*eshho.agnistapatyeshha suurya
eshha parjanya maghavaaneshha vaayuh/
eshha prithivii rayirdevah
sadasachchaamritam cha yat.h || 5 ||*

It gives heat as fire, it is the sun, it is the rain; it is Indra, it is the wind, it is the earth, it is the moon (food). It is being and non - being; it is immortality.

Prana is conceived as the nucleus of all energy both within the body and without in the universe. It is the power that vitalizes the matter in life and is not confined to the air we breathe in and breathe out.

Prana is the sign of life and all that sustains life as well as the eater and the eaten. Prana is also gross when it is the effect and subtle when it is the cause. It is also said to be *amruta*, the nectar of immortality that supports gods and human beings.

Prana is the truth behind all that have "form" like fire, water and earth as well as are "formless" like space and air.

Mantra 6

*araa iva rathanaabhau praane sarvam pratishthitam.h |
richo yajuumshhi saamaani yagyah kshatram brahma cha || 6 ||*

As spokes in the hub of a wheel, everything rests on Prana, including the Rig - Veda, the Yajur - Veda, the Sama - Veda, the kshatriyas and the brahmanas.

Here prana is being compared to the hub of a wheel. Between the hub and the rim there are spokes in the wheel. Without the hub there can neither be spokes nor the wheel. This universe, this cosmos, is like a big wheel and the organs are like the spokes. The organs (spokes) rest on the prana (hub). Prana sustains the organs and everything rests on prana (*prane sarvam pratishthitam*).

All the Vedas are knowledge and the supporter of this knowledge is prana, the life energy. Whether one is kshatriya or a brahmana, everybody is sustained by prana.

Sanakara says ‘*pranah sarvam*’; all that we see, all that exists, is nothing but a manifestation of prana.

Mantra 7

Prajaapatish-charasi garbhe tvameva pratijaayase | tubhyam praana prajaastvimaabalim haranti yah pranaih pratitishhthasi || 7 ||

As Prajapati, the Lord of living beings, you move about in the womb; it is you, indeed, who are born afterwards as the child. O Prana, you dwell in the body as the chief of other organs. To you alone all these living beings offer oblations.

Continuing their praise of prana, the organs say ‘you are prajapati, the Lord of beings which is another name for Brahma, the Creator. You move about in the mother’s womb. When you are born, you have the likeness of your parents’. Sankara says “Because you, O Prana, are Prajapati, you are the same in different bodies, in different generations. You look like your parents and your parents look like you. This is a predetermined fact since you are the one being coming back again and again”. The idea is that parents are reborn as children.

The mantra says the sense organs bring offerings to prana. What does this mean? Prana dwelling in the body is like a king and the sense organs are like his subjects. Offerings or presents are tokens of love, reverence and respect to another. If we see something, our eyes gather impressions which are conveyed to prana for further processing which ultimately result in some form of action. So is the case with the other sense organs. This conveying of impressions by the sense organs to the prana is called here as offering oblations or offering presents to prana. This is so because the impressions gathered by the sense organs do not serve any purpose by themselves unless they are all gathered for prana which converts them into the resultant action through mind and intellect.

Yah pranaih pratitishhthasi means these organs depend on prana, rest on prana and hence they are paying tribute to prana.

Mantra 8

devaanaamasi vahnitamah pitrinaam prathamaa svadhaa | rishhiinaam charitam satyam atharvaangirasaamasi || 8 ||

You are the chief carrier of offerings to the gods. You are the recipient of food first offered to the souls of departed ancestors. You are the Truth that sages practice. You also help guide the organs so that they function correctly.

When, in a sacrifice, oblations are offered to the gods, fire, Agni, carries them to the recipients. The organs say here that Prana is the carrier and also the deity to whom the offering is carried. Out of respect, the first offering is to the forefathers and the ancestors.

Now the organs say to prana that the offering is in fact offered to prana to whom it is meant. It is prana that carries the offering to the forefathers.

This mantra calls the sense organs rishis – those who see the truth. If we have to experience the truth we have to take the help of sense organs who reveal the truth. By living as a human being and experiencing the things through the sense organs we realize that all we see before us is God in different forms. So the organs say to prana “You are that life working through the organs. You make them work correctly so that the Truth may be known. According to scriptures, you are Atharva whom the sages beginning with Angira worshipped”.

Mantra 9

*indrastvam praana tejasaa rudro.asi parirakshitaa/ tvam-antarikshe charasi suuryastvam
jyotishhaam patih || 9 ||*

O Prana, You are Indra; you are Rudra, too, in prowess. You are also their Protector. As the sun you move about in the sky and you are the lord of all luminous bodies.

The organs praise Prana as Indra, the Supreme Lord of all and as Rudra, the destroyer of all by his *tejasa*, power. Prana is also extolled as *parirakshitaa*, he who protects the world, Vishnu. The eulogy continues: prana moves around the sky through the endless process of rising and setting as the Sun; among the luminaries in the sky such as stars and planets, he is the Lord of all the lights, *jyotishhaam patih*.

Mantra 10

*yadaa tvam-abhivarshhasyathemaah praana te prajaah / aanandaruupaastishhthanti
kaamaayaannam bhavishhyati iti || 10 ||*

O Prana, when, you pour down rain, all living beings are delighted, who think that there will be as much food as they would like to have.

Prana is the source of rain. When it rains all living beings are excited at the prospects of having a good harvest and plenty of food to eat. Sankara comments that all living beings are prana’s own progeny and they are not separate from him.

Mantra 11

*vraatyastvam praanaikarshhirattaa vishvasya satpatih / vayamaadyasya daataarah pita
tvam maatarishva nah || 11 ||*

O Prana, you are by nature pure. You are the sacred ekarshi fire, the consumer of everything, the gracious Lord of the world. We offer you oblations, O all-pervading Air, you are our father.

Since prana was the first born there was none to perform the sacramental initiatory rites for him and hence Prana is called *vratya* (some one who is fallen) in the mantra. But prana is pure by nature and needs no sacramental rites in order to purify itself. This is an instance in Sanskrit literature where praise is offered through pointing out its blemish which is called “*vyangyastuti*”.

‘*Ekarshi fire*’ is a well known sacrificial fire ritual in the Atharva Veda. Consumer of everything refers to the oblations in a sacrifice. Prana is compared to air because we cannot subsist without air. So the organs say that ‘we are all your children and we are all dependent on you’. Hence he is “*vishvasya satpatih*” the only gracious Lord of this universe.

Mantra 12

*yaa te tanuurvaachi pratishhthitaa yaa shrotre yaa cha chakshushhi | yaa cha manasi
santataa shivaam taam kuruu motkramiih || 12 ||*

Make auspicious that form of yours which abides in our speech, in our hearing, in our seeing and which also pervades the mind. Please do not go away from us!

According to the commentator Ananda Giri’s opinion, of the different forms of prana, it is *apana* that controls the organ of speech; *vyana* of hearing; *prana* (breath) of seeing; and *samana*, of thinking. If prana leaves the body none of those forms can function and the organs will become inactive.

It is prana which supplies oil to the lamps of the senses which are kept burning. Just as the whole crowd of bees keeps functioning so long as the queen-bee is present, the senses keep functioning as long as prana is present. With the withdrawal of prana the senses disintegrate - the lamps are there, but the flame is gone for want of oil. Hence this appeal is made by the senses to prana not to depart from them and to be always with them and make them work for the benefit of others.

This mantra suggests that the form of prana is invisible - the eye cannot see it, but the eye cannot function without it; the ear cannot hear it, but the ear cannot hear without it and so on. The mantra adds that prana is continuously existent in the mind. Does mind contain prana? How does it live in the mind? It is this which forms the subject of the enquiry of the third question which we will be studying later.

Mantra 13

*praanasyedam vashe sarvam tridive yat.h pratishhthitam.h | maateva putraan.h
rakshasva shriishcha pragyaam cha vidhehi na iti || 13 ||*

All that exists here is under the control of Prana and also what exists in heaven. Protect us as a mother her sons; bestow upon us prosperity and wisdom.

Prana controls everything that exists. We pray that prana may protect us just as a mother protects her children. We also pray that he may grant us good fortune of divine qualities and wisdom by which success in spiritual path is assured.

iti prashnopanishhadi dvitiiyah prashnah //

HERE ENDS THE SECOND QUESTION OF THE PRASNA UPANISHAD.

We shall take up the Third Question next time.

HARIH OM

Prasna Upanishad (Part-3):
How Does Life-Breath Function?
T.N.Sethumadhavan

PREAMBLE

While the first question dealt with the creation of the gross physical body, the second question concerned itself with the Prana which vitalizes the body and without which the body would disintegrate. The discussion between the students and the teacher on the Prana has reached that stage where a student felt like inquiring as to where does this Prana reside and from where does it operate?

Thus we enter into the third question where the student named Kausalya seeks further clarification on *Prana* – its origin, the entrance, functioning and departure from the body as also its importance both at individual and universal levels. In response, Pippalada first compliments Kausalya for the good question to encourage him. He then replies to each of the six segments of the question.

THE TEXT

THIRD QUESTION

Mantra 1

*atha hainam kaushalyashhchaashvalaayanah paprachchha / bhagavan.h kuta eshha
praano jaayate kathamaayaatyasmijnshariira aatmaanam vaa pravibhajya katham
pratishhthate kenotkramate katham bahyamabhidhate kathamadhyaatmamamiti || 1||*

Then Kausalya, the son of Asvala, asked Pippalada: Sir, from where does this Prana born? How does it come into this body? How does it abide in the body after it has divided itself? How does it depart? How does it support what is without and what is within the body?

The enquiry is about where did this Prana come from? Prana here denotes vital breath which sustains the body. This Prana is the manifestation of the cosmic Prana or Prajapati. What is its source, the beginning? Who created the universe? Vedanta says that there is no such thing as creation. Something cannot be created out of nothing. If something exists, we assume something else was there before it. Vedanta says that Brahman is the substratum on which this universe rests. In fact, Brahman alone exists.

Then how does Prana enter the body and how does it leave? Previously under the Second Question (Mantra 3), Pippalada mentioned that Prana divides itself into five parts. How does this division take place and what are the functions of the various parts? How does the Prana make all the created beings operate? How does it support things pertaining to the body or outside the body?

Mantra 2

*tasmai sa houvaachaatiprashhchaan.h prichchhasi brahmishhtho.asiiti tasmaatte.aham
braviimi ||2||*

To him the teacher replied: You are asking difficult questions; you must be exceedingly devoted to Brahman. Therefore I will answer you.

The teacher was convinced that the student was showing genuine interest and seriousness in learning Brahma Vidya and that his questions were not out of idle inquisitiveness. In fact the nature of questions was such that they transcend the comprehension by persons of normal consciousness. Hence he promises him that he will reply them.

Mantra 3

*aatmana esha praano jaayate | yathaishhaa purushhe chhaayaitasminnetadaatatam
manokritenaayaatyasmijnshariire ||3||*

This Prana comes from the Self, Atman. Just as a shadow is cast by the body of a person, so this Prana is, inherent in the Self, Atman and it enters the body by the activities of the mind.

We have seen in Mantra 2 under the previous question that Prana is continuously existent in the mind. This concept is elaborated under this Mantra with the help of a simile of the substance and the shadow.

When a physical body of a person casts its shadow, the shadow does not exist independent of the body as shadow is inherent in the body. The shadow is projected by the substance, so is the whole universe is a projection of the Self. The shadow has no intrinsic existence; it enjoys only a projected existence. A shadow is elusive for it can never be caught. It escapes the grasp of man for it is intangible indicating that the Self or spirit is present in the universe only in an intangible manner. Intangibility which resides in all the objects is the shadow cast by the Self and like shadow it remains beyond the grasp of man. That is the nature of Prana. Prana is projected from the Self, Atman. Prana is perceived to exist because of Atman which is its substratum. As there can be no shadow without substance so also is Prana and it cannot be independent. Prana is entirely dependent on the Self and in that sense it is unreal. It appears to be real because it rests on the reality, the Self.

How did Prana enter the body? It enters the body through the activities of the mind; that is to say through action arising from volition, desire etc., which constitutes the mind. The very existence of Prana in the body is dependent upon the movement of the mind. The senses are vitalized by Prana and in turn, Prana is impelled by the activities of the mind.

A man's present life is the result of his thoughts in a previous existence. This body is fashioned by our own mind - by our volition, our desires, our decisions and resolutions during our previous life. According to the Upanishad the mind creates the body, that is to

say that you are the architect of your own future life; as you think so you become. Our desires bring us back to this world again and again. Thus this text makes a reference to the doctrine of rebirth which is a very important concept in Vedanta.

Even under the Yoga system Prana follows Thought according to which the movement of Prana can be controlled by thought. It is possible to focus the attention of Prana on any centre of the body by clearly defined thought process.

FIVEFOLD NATURE OF PRANA

Mantra 4

*yathaa samraadevaadhikritaan.h viniyunkte / etan.h graamaanotaan.h
graamaanadhitishhtasvetyevamevaishha praana itaraan.h praanaan.h prithak.h
prithageva sannidhatte ||4||*

As an emperor commands his officials, saying; "You supervise these villages" so does this Prana employ the other Pranas (various other vital-breaths), to their respective functions.

The nucleus of all activities of the body is the Prana, the Chief (Life-Force in the body) which gets its work done through *upa-pranas* or secondary pranas just as a king gets his work done through his subordinates like governors or subedars. The activities of a living body can be classified under five different categories or five pranas with their own nomenclature and a clear-cut division of duties allotted to each of them. Each prana has got its own jurisdiction wherein it functions with its specified headquarters fixed at a stipulated location in the body. The secondary pranas function in the various sectors of the body to contribute to the maximum experiences gained by the Chief-Prana.

It must be noted clearly that the Vital-Breath or Prana is one and that it is known by different names on account of different duties it discharges in the body. Prana is the vitalizing force for the entire body but in and through different centers of the body it discharges various functions. The five-fold nature of Prana is only a functional division and we should keep in mind that there are no five different vital-breaths.

DIVISION DESCRIBED

Mantra 5

*paayuupasthe.apaanam chakshuhshrotre mukhanaasikaabhyaam praanah svayam
praatishhtate madhye tu samaanah | eshha hyetaddhutamannam samam nayati
tasmaadetaah saptaarchishho bhavanti || 5||*

Prana (life-breath) engages apana (out-breath) in the organs of excretion and generation; he himself (life-breath) moves through the mouth and nose and dwells in the eye and ear. In the middle is samana (equalizing-breath); it distributes

equally whatever food is eaten. It also activates the seven flames (openings in the face).

Himself remaining in his own nature as the Chief Prana in the mouth, the nose, the eye and the ear, he makes them speak, inhale and exhale the air, see and hear respectively. He makes the *apana* to occupy the region of the anus and the organs of generation and causes them to throw out the waste products of the body and initiates the process of procreation. Between the *prana* and the *apana*, in the region of the navel, is placed the *samana* which is given the function of distributing equally to all the parts of the body energy and vitality produced on account of the digestion of food and water by the *Vaisvanara* fire in the stomach. It is from this fire which rises afterwards up to the region of the heart seven flames shoot up as it were in the form of two eyes, two ears, two nostrils and one tongue in the mouth and enables the soul to have the experience of forms, sounds, smells and flavors.

Mantra 6

*hridi hyeshha aatmaa | atraitadekashatam naadiinam taasaam shatam shatamekaikasyaa
dvaasaptatirdvaasaptatih pratishaakhaanaadiisahasraani bhavantyaasu vyaanashcharati
|| 6||*

Self, the atman dwells in the heart. It (heart) has a hundred and one arteries (nadi). Each of these has a hundred smaller arteries. Again, each of these smaller arteries is divided into seventy two thousand subsidiary branches. Vyana (diffused-breath) moves within them.

The lotus-like heart is the seat of the subtle Atman known as '*Lingatma*'. From within the cavity or space of the heart one-hundred-one main arteries are spread out every one of which is branched out into one-hundred sub-arteries. Each of these sub-arteries is branched off into extremely minute arteries numbering seventy-two-thousand. Prana moves through all these arteries and on account of this all-pervading nature it is known as *vyana*. As *vyana* moves all over the body it gives power and energy to all the limbs and senses to perform their functions.

A word of caution is necessary here. Based on our modern medical knowledge we should not to be over-concerned about the actual number of arteries, nerve centers etc., but understand the concept behind this picturisation of the human body system laid down in the *shruti* dating back to the Vedic period.

Mantra 7

*athaikayordhva udaanah punyena punyam lokam nayati paapena
paapamubhaabhyaameva manushhyalokam.h || 7||*

And then udana (ascending-breath), ascending upward through one of these arteries, leads the departing soul to the virtuous world, for its virtuous deeds; to the

sinful world, for its sinful deeds; and to the human world if the deeds are a mixture of both (virtuous and sinful).

As for the *Udana*, it rises by the *Susumna-nadi*, which is the only one amidst the various arteries which goes up to the top of the head and taking the soul after it, departs from the body and reaches it either to the regions of the blessed or to those of the condemned according to the man's good or bad actions on the earth during his life time. In case the merits and demerits gathered during the life time balance each other, the soul is brought back by *Udana* to the mortal world of humans to go through the cycle again.

Mantra 8

*aadityo ha vai baahyah praana udayatyeshha hyenam chaakshushham
praanamanugrihnaanaah | prithivyaam yaa devataa saishhaa purushhasya
apaanamavashhtabhyaantaraa yadaakaashah sa samaano vaayurvyanaah || 8||*

The sun is verily the cosmic Prana. It blesses the in-breath (prana) in the eyes. The divinity which is in the earth supports a person's out-breath (apana). The space (akasa) between the sun and the earth is the equalizing-breath (samana). Air is the diffused-breath (vyana).

This Mantra takes up the question as to how the prana conducts the functioning of the body and the senses. Prana (life-breath) in living beings is a manifestation of the cosmic life principle. The principal prana or cosmic energy manifests itself as the sun, fire, space, air and heat and upholds the deities controlling these elements. Prana, apana, vyana, udana and samana are the internal manifestations of the principal prana in the individual body. These five forms of prana enable the physical organs to perform their functions.

Each of the five forms of life-breath in human body is influenced by its cosmic counterpart. Sun corresponds to *prana* which is active in the eyes. Earth corresponds to *apana* which regulates excretory and regenerative system. Space corresponds to *samana* which regulates the digestive system. Air corresponds to *vyana* which energizes the entire body. Fire (*teja*) corresponds to *udana* which sustains life. Thus there is a direct relationship between the universe and the individual, between macrocosm and microcosm, between *samashti* and *vyashti*.

The chief prana in this way supports both the external elements with their respective deities and the internal organs with the life forces that control them. The individual (microcosm or *vyashti*) himself is projected here as the total (macrocosm or *samashti*). As such there are in the outer world of totality points representing our own inner personalities and activities. Pippalada illustrated as above the points in the cosmos where we can visualize the same pranic forces that are functioning in us in an enlarged and extended plane.

Mantra 9

*tejo ha vaa udaanastasmaadupashaantatejaah / punarbhavamindriyairmanasi
sampadhyamaanaih || 9||*

Fire (teja) verily, is the ascending-breath (udana). Therefore he whose fire of life has been extinguished takes a rebirth, with the senses absorbed in the mind.

When a person dies his physical body disintegrates, but the power or strength of his sense organs or pranic vitality withdraws from these centers and become united with the subtle body, the mind. The subtle body is conveyed to its next field of activity (for rebirth in another body) by the energy called *udana*. Thus it is not just our deeds but also our thoughts and words in this life that influence our next life. (Ref: Gita 15.8)

So long as the *udana* exists in the body a person is alive and his body remains warm. When the *udana* leaves, the warmth is gone, the person is dead and the body is cold. Thus a dead body is thing in which the flames are extinguished as this Mantra says.

Mantra 10

*yachchittastenaishha praanamaayaati / praanastejasaa yuktah sahaatmanaa
tathaasankalpitam lokam nayati || 10||*

Whatever are one's thoughts (at the time of death) that thought remains with the outgoing prana. Prana coupled with udana and Atman, leads to whatever world has been conceived (in the last thoughts).

This Mantra explains who determines the field of next activity when the *udana* leaves the body along with the mind. It says that the last thoughts at the time of departure determine the future field for the prana or ego-centre or *jivatma* (which is the performer of action and the experiencer of the result) to live out in its next birth. The after-death experience of the soul depends entirely upon the desires it cherishes at the time of death. If it has attained peace and freedom before death, it experiences them afterwards as well. (Ref: Gita 8.6)

RESULTS OF THIS KNOWLEDGE

Mantra 11

*ya evam vidvaan.h praanam veda na haasya prajaa hiiyate.amrito bhavati tadeshah
shlokaah || 11||*

A wise man who knows Prana thus does not lose his offspring and becomes immortal. As to this there is the following verse:

All possible human wants have been classified in Vedanta under three categories viz., desire for progeny, desire for name and fame, and desire for wealth. Here desire for progeny indicates human relationship with others in a society. Pippalada suggests that he who meditates on the truth that one's own microcosmic form with its activity centers is

nothing but a miniature universe with its cosmic forces in the macrocosm will find his relationship with others in the world always congenial. He attains the immortal nature of prana himself. This is supported by a Mantra in the Rig Veda as under.

Mantra 12

*utpattimaayatim sthaanam vibhutvam chaiva pajnachadhaa /
adhyaatmam chaiva praanasya vigyaayaamritamashnute
vigyaayaamritamashnuta iti || 12||*

He who knows the origin of Prana, its entry, its abode, its fivefold distribution, its omnipresence, its internal aspect and also its external, obtains immortality; yea, he obtains immortality.

Explanation of these terms: Origin of prana – From the Supreme self; Entry – Into the physical body through the activity of the mind; Abode – in the different organs; Fivefold distribution – Refers to the fivefold modifications and their respective functions; Internal aspect – Control of the organs such as eye, ear etc; External aspect – Control of sun, space etc. He who knows implies not merely intellectual understanding but actual realization of the truth. Immortality means perfect identity with total mind, the Hiranyagarbha. Repetition marks the completion of the discussion.

The gist of the discussions between the teacher and the student in this third question of the Upanishad can be summarized in a table as under.

PANCHA PRANAS OR FIVE VITAL AIRS & THEIR RAMIFICATIONS
EACH WITH A PHYSICAL AND COSMIC PARALLEL

NO.	NAME	FUNCTIONS	LOCATION AT PHYSICAL LEVEL	PARALLEL AT COSMIC LEVEL
1	Prana	Respiration – inhaling & exhaling.	Moves in Mouth & Nose and dwells in Ear and Eye (Seven Openings)	Sun
2	Apana	Evacuation of wastes & Procreation	Anus & Genitals	Earth
3	Vyana	Circulation - pervades the nerves of the body	Entire Body	Air
4	Udana	Pushing Upwards - maintains heat in the body- leads the soul at death	Throat	Fire
5	Samana	Assimilation & Distribution of food	Central Region of the Body.	Space

It is pertinent to note here the similarity between the human body and a Hindu temple structure. In Hinduism a temple represents the outer and the inner cosmos or as the symbol of the cosmos both at the level of the universe and at the individual plane, making it possible for the devotee to get inspired to achieve his own spiritual transformation.

The outer cosmos is expressed in terms of various astronomical connections between the temple structure and the motions of the sun, the moon, and the planets. The inner cosmos is represented in terms of the consciousness at the womb of the temple (*Garbha Gruha*) and various levels of the superstructure that correspond to the states of consciousness.

The main idol placed within the brick structure of the altar represents the consciousness principle within the individual just as a relic within a stupa. The position of the idols within the temple is a symbolic representation of the spatial projections of the cosmic purusha in his own body.

iti prashnopanishhadi tritiiyah prashnah //

HERE ENDS THE THIRD QUESTION OF THE PRASNA UPANISHAD.

We shall take up the Fourth Question next time.

HARIH OM

Prasna Upanishad (Part-4):
Who in man sleeps, dreams, and keeps awake?
T.N.Sethumadhavan

PREAMBLE

Vedanta considers life in its totality and not in segments. It examines the experiences taking place in life in all the three states of its consciousness viz., waking (*jaग्रत*), dream (*स्वप्ना*) and deep-sleep (*सुशुप्ति*). We have seen that the third question in this Upanishad ended with the teacher asserting that whoever knows the relationship of prana with the mind discovers the rationale behind the continued existence. Mind and body are inter-related and this inter-relationship is due to functioning of prana. It was explained that if the body is to remain healthy with vitality, prana should be effectively and properly functioning. But the functioning of prana in the body depends upon the mind and hence the students turn their attention now to the mind. Thus Suryayani Gargya asks Pippalada the fourth question which is concerned with the functioning of human consciousness or with the operations of the mind in all the three states of consciousness.

THE TEXT

FOURTHQUESTION

Mantra 1

*atha hainaM sauryaayaNi gaargyaH paprachchha | bhagavannetasmin.h purushhe kaani
svapanti kaanyasmiJNjaagrati katara eshha devaH svapnaan.h pashyati kasyaitat.h
sukhaM bhavati kasminnu sarve sampratishhTitaa bhavantiiti || 1||*

Next Sauryayani, belonging to the family of Garga, asked: Sir, what are they that sleep in man and what are they that remain awake in him? Which deity is it that sees dreams? Whose is the happiness? In whom, again, are all these gathered together?

All the questions asked in this section basically relate to the Supreme Brahman. They are:

1. Which organs in the human body go to sleep and rest? Cessation of physical activities distinguishes sleep from waking state and therefore the activities of the waking state are attributed to the body and the senses and not to the Self or Atman. Without discrimination between the body and the Self, the knowledge of the Self is not possible. The answer to this question is given in Mantra 2.
2. Which organs again keep awake and continue to work? Who preserves the body during waking, dreaming and deep-sleep? Prana is the protector of the body. The preservation of the body is attributed to Prana and not to Atman. The answer is given in Mantras 3-4.

3. Between these two groups of organs, one that is active and the other inactive, which one sees dreams? Who sees the dreams? Is it the body or is it the senses? The dreams are attributed to the mind. This is dealt with in Mantra 5.

4. Who is it that enjoys the mystery of sleep with no dreams? Where do all these organs rest at the time of deep sleep? This question relates to the state of dreamless sleep, characterized by bliss resulting in the absence of any pain at all. This state is because of absence of mind's contact with any objects. When a man gets up from dreamless sleep he feels very happy. The question is who is the experiencer of this blissful state of mind? The experiencer of this bliss is attributed to the undifferentiated cosmic ignorance due to which the Atman remains covered at the time of deep sleep. The answer is explained in Mantra 6.

5. In whom, again, are all these gathered together? The implication is who is it that is free from the three states of waking, dream and deep sleep and is also man's final goal? The answer is the imperishable Atman, known as Turiya. All the experiences of waking, dreaming and deep sleep blend together indistinguishably in the imperishable Atman as honey collected from different flowers blend in the honey found in a bee-hive or as rivers blend in the ocean. They are non-different from Atman and disappear in it. This is discussed in Mantras 7-9.

The question is that when the physical body is asleep, is there any other energy ingredient which keeps the body functioning, for instance even in sleep the heart beats and supplies blood to other parts, digestion system goes on working, the body continues to maintain its warmth although the sleeping person is not aware of these activities taking place in his own physical structure. Similarly when a man enters into a dream state he literally goes into different kinds of situations. The inquiry is what is the nature and configuration of the dreamer. Likewise, although we are not conscious about anything in deep sleep state, when we get up we remember that we had a sound a sound blissful sleep. The student wants to know who enjoys the blissful sleep. Lastly the student asks about the substratum on which all these three states are finding place in the individuals.

Although these three states apparently look different from each other, there seems to be one common denominator which remembers all these different sets of experiences. In order to remember these things we must be possessing that factor in us which itself experiences all the three states and yet it is not the waker or the dreamer or the sleeper. The disciple is demanding an explanation for this all-witnessing-factor, the divine-spark, the life center by asking "on what do all these depend"?

It may also be noted that these questions relate to the dream and deep sleep states and not to the waking state. The reasons may be that the waking state has been covered under the earlier questions raised by the other students or it may be due to the fact that according to Vedanta waking state is not different from dream state as the perceiving mechanism in both these states is one and the same.

Mantra 2

tasmai sa hovacha | yatha gaargya mariichayo.arkasyaastam gachchhatah sarvaa etasmi.nstejomandala ekiibhavanti | taah punah punarudayatah pracharantyevam ha vai tat.h sarvam pare deve manasyekiibhavati tena tarhyeshha purushho na shrinoti na pashyati na jighrati na rasayate na sprishate naabhivadate naadatte naanandayate na visrijate neyaayate svapitiityaachakshate || 2||

To him Pippalada replied: O Gargya, as the rays of the sun, when it sets, become one with the luminous orb and again go forth when the sun rises, even so, verily, all these - the objects and the senses - become one in the superior god (highest Deva), the mind. Therefore at that time a man hears not, sees not, smells not, tastes not, touches not, speaks not, grasps not, enjoys not, evacuates not and does not move about. He sleeps - that is what people say.

The question was “what are the factors in the sleeping man”? This Mantra clearly defines what ‘sleep’ is and enumerates the factors and faculties that go into a dormant position or sleep-mode during deep-sleep state.

The waking state is that period of our experience when, through the instruments of cognition, we are aware of the sense objects of the world. This state is where all our sense organs are active in our physical structure. Sleep is not like that waking state. Hence the teacher says that at the time of sleep all the indriyas retire into their very source, the mind.

Mind is the prime-mover of all the sense organs. There cannot be any functioning of the sense organs without the mind actively directing them. In a pyramidal structure the mind is the apex, below which are the sense organs and at the base are the five great gross and subtle elements, The teacher says that in the deep sleep state the entire world of plurality cognized through the sense organs become one with the Deva, the mind, meaning thereby that the powers of perception by the sense organs get withdrawn from the respective spheres of operation and get merged as it were with the very mind which impelled them to function.

This concept has been explained by the teacher with the example of the rising and setting sun. The rays of the setting sun look as if they are withdrawn and deposited in the sun’s orb for the night which again shoots up when the sun rises in the morning. So also in an individual his sense organs are withdrawn to their source of perception (mind) temporarily during sleep and come out to the normal state of functioning when he awakes.

Thus the period of experience in life when the mind of an individual has withdrawn its contacts from the five organs of knowledge and five organs of action is considered as sleep. Therefore sleeping is a condition when the human mind has parked itself for the time being. When it emerges out the individual comes back to his waking state of experience.

The enumeration of bodily functions narrated in the Mantra covers all the tasks of the instruments of knowledge and instruments of action. When both of them are inactive the individual is said to be 'asleep'.

Mantra 3

*praanaagraya evaitasmin.h pure jaagrati | gaarhapatyo ha vaa eshho.apaano
vyaano.anvaahaaryapachano yadgaarhapatyaat.h praniiyate pranayanaadaahavaniiyah
praanah || 3||*

The flames of Prana alone remain awake (bright) in this city (of the body) at the time of sleep. The Apana is the Garhapatya Fire. The Vyana is the Anvaharyapachana Fire. The Prana is the Ahavaniya Fire because it is taken out of the Garhapatya Fire.

The man's body is compared to a city. As a city has gates the body likewise has gates or apertures which are eleven in number viz., two each of eyes, nostrils, and ears as also the mouth, the navel, the top of the head, the organs of excretion and generation. Bhagavad Gita refers to the body as *navadvarapuri* or a city with nine gates. The person who lives in this city or *puri* is called Purusha or the Self. The teacher says that Prana lives in this city keeping itself awake at the time of sleep. How? This is explained by giving the example of fires lit during Yajna or sacrifices.

At the time of the Vedic period of civilization, the social life and culture were revolving round the performance of various sacrifices or Yajna during which oblations were offered in the various fire wells (*Yajna Kund*) for invoking the deities. As a daily ritual lifelong performance of the *Agnihotra* sacrifice was enjoined upon the householders. Three fires were necessary for this sacrifice. They are

1. The *Garhapatya* fire – This fire is never allowed to be put out. It had to be kept alive through out the year. At the time of *Agnihotra* sacrifice the other two fires mentioned below were lit from this fire.
2. The *Ahavaniya* fire – This is used for offering oblations to the gods and
3. The *Anvaharyapachana* fire, also known as *Dakshina* or Southern fire – This is used for offering oblations to the departed ancestors. As this is placed on the southern side of the altar it is called *Dakshinagni*.

These fires were considered to be the means of communion with the gods and the ancestors in the olden times by the Hindus.

These external fires have their counterparts in the bodies of man. These sacrifices can also be made mentally. In this Mantra various Pranas are identified with various fires as shown below because similar to Yajna fires, the pranas also remain active in our bodies as long as we are living.

Vyana – with the Southern fire because it issues from the right side of the heart.

Apana – with Garhapatya fire because it ever remains active.

Prana – with the Ahvaniya fire.

Even when all the other senses remain inactive in sleep, the different pranas keep watch over the body. Therefore they are compared to the sacrificial fires.

Mantra 4

yaduchchhvaasanihshvaasaavetaavaahutii samam nayatiiti sa samaanah | mano ha vaava yajamaanah | ishhtaphalamevodaanah | sa enam yajamaanamaharaharbrahma gamayati || 4||

Samana is so called because it distributes equally the two oblations, namely, the out - breathing and the in - breathing; it is the priest. The mind, verily, is the sacrificer. Udana is the fruit of the sacrifice, because it leads the sacrificer every day, in deep sleep, to Brahman.

The example of Yajna is continued. During the performance of a sacrifice the priest distributes the oblations equally to the fire. So also, the Samana distributes equally the two breaths – inhalation and exhalation – for the protection of the body. The number of oblations and breaths are the same i.e., two. Hence the one who has this knowledge about the prana is deemed to perform an Agnihotra sacrifice even in sleep.

In a sacrifice, the sacrificer (*yajaman*) is an important person. He performs the sacrifice with an end in view, say heaven or a son. Similarly the mind is also an important organ in this virtual Yajna, for it offers the senses and objects as oblations in to the ever wakeful fire of prana and yearns for experiencing the bliss of Brahman in a dreamless sleep. [Note: Compare this statement to the different types of yajnas described in the 4th Chapter of the Bhagavad Gita.]

At the time of death, the *yajaman* leaves the body through Udana and reaps the fruit of the sacrifice in heaven. Similarly, the same udana leads the mind (the *yajaman*) away from the dream state to the dreamless sleep state and enables it to attain everlasting bliss as it were the Bliss of imperishable Brahman. Therefore udana is called the fruit of the sacrifice.

Here we should not jump to the conclusion that once we get the peace of mind and happiness out of a dreamless sleep we are deemed to have attained the Bliss of realizing Brahman or attained the Self. In that case taking a sleeping pill will be the easiest route to achieve Brahman. It is not as simple as that.

Vedanta describes three states of consciousness. They are:

1. The waking state during which one is conscious of the physical world outside.
2. The dream state, when one is conscious of the inner world and of objects created from the impressions of the waking state.
3. The state of dreamless sleep, when consciousness is free from the duality of subject and object and one experiences the feeling of undifferentiated awareness.

There is the fourth state called *Turiya* or Pure consciousness which permeates the three states and is immortal which is called *Brahman*. The three states of waking, dream and deep sleep are common to both the ignorant person and the illumined where the sense organs do not function and the prana fires keep a watch over the body and where the mind, free from waking and dreaming, remains inactive.

Vedanta often compares the Consciousness of Brahman to the consciousness experienced during deep sleep. Both are characterized by absence of pain and of the subject-object relationship. However, the differences between the ordinary bliss i.e. happiness we get out of dreamless sleep (considered as a state of ignorance) and the Bliss we will get on realizing Brahman (considered as a state of illumination) are fundamental as explained in the following table.

SR.NO.	BLISS OUT OF DREAMLESS SLEEP	BLISS OF IMPERISHABLE BRAHMAN
1	Mechanically attained.	Attained after meditation.
2	It is impermanent.	It is permanent and everlasting.
3	Consciousness experienced is covered by layers of ignorance.	Consciousness is covered by knowledge of Brahman.
4	The ignorant does not obtain any fruit.	The illumined person experiences the knowledge of Brahman as a reward.
5	Hence a normal person after waking from deep sleep leads the normal life of ignorance.	The knower of Brahman never forgets his real nature at any time and knows it as Bliss of Brahman.

The question ‘which deity is that which witnesses dreams’ is answered. The answer is the mind with the senses gathered into it that experiences the dreams and not the Atman. Dreaming is the feature of the mind and not of the Self. Thus the purpose of this Mantra is to praise the Knowledge of Brahman.

Mantra 5

*atraishha devah svapne mahimaanamanubhavati | yaddrishhtam drishhtamanupashyati
shrutam shrutamevaarthamanushrinoti deshadigantaraishcha pratymanubhuutam punah
punah pratymanubhavati drishhtam chaadrishhtam cha shrutam chaashrutam
chaanubhuutam chaananubhuutam cha schchaasachcha sarvam pashyati sarvah pasyati
// 5//*

There, in dreams, that god, the mind, experiences glory. Whatever has been seen he sees again; whatever has been heard he hears again; whatever has been experienced in different countries and quarters, he experiences again. Whatever has been seen or not seen, heard or not heard and whatever is real or not real - he sees it all. He sees all, himself being all.

After answering the question about the deep sleep state, Pippalda now takes the next enquiry as to ‘what is the Deva who sees the dream?’ The answer is an exposition about the dream state.

In the waking state we get the experiences of the outer world through our consciousness of our body which is called the waker in us. Similarly, the dream can be defined as the experience of the mind when it is completely unconscious of the body but is able to recognize the impressions it had gathered when it was in the waking consciousness state. Hence the Mantra says “The mind sees again what has already been seen; the mind hears again what has been heard; it enjoys what has been enjoyed in different climes and places”. The mind is referred to here as the ‘Deva’, the deity. The Mantra goes one step further and says “It sees what has not been seen, never heard, never experienced, whether it is real or unreal.

We must note that the mind of a dreamer and dreamt are one and the same because while dreaming we believe everything dreamt as true and at the same time when we get up we realize that everything was a mere dream and there was nothing real. Thus the waker realizes that there was nothing but his mind in both the situations. Thus it is concluded that mind only sees the dreams.

Mantra 6

*sa yadaa tejasaa.abhibhuuto bhavati | atraishha devah svapnaanna pashyatyatha
yadaitasmijnshariira etatsukham bhavati || 6||*

When the mind is overpowered by light that mind sees no dreams; at that time, bliss arises in this body.

When the mind is withdrawn from the worldly objects, it enters into the dream state wherein again it gets preoccupied with the world of plurality though such projection of plurality is by itself. When the mind itself is dropped we experience blissful state in which the ‘sleeper’ alone is the Lord. When the outside world and dream world are taken away from the mind what remains is only the consciousness and the man is said to have reached the dreamless deep sleep state. At this state the man is nearest to the Self and hence he is said to have been overpowered by light.

This leads us to the question “Who that ‘sleeper’ is? He is the jivatman as we shall be coming to that point a bit later in this section.

At this state of deep sleep the sleeper experiences bliss which, however, is of a negative kind. Negative because it is merely constituted of absence of agitations and as soon as he awakes from sleep he goes back to the previous state of worldliness. This is called ignorance in Vedanta.

Thus what the teacher says here is that when we are neither seeing the dream nor awake and consequently do not experience any agitations or disturbances of the mind either due to external world or due to internal projections, we experience negative bliss which is called the state of deep sleep.

Mantra 7

sa yathaa sobhya vayaa.nsi vasovriksham sampratishhthante | evam ha vai tat.h sarvam para aatmani sampratishhthate || 7||

As a bird goes to a tree to roost, even so, O friend, all this rests in the Supreme Atman.

Now the state of deep sleep, *susupti*, is described by way of a simile. The birds go back to their nests after daylong flying for taking rest and get back fully refreshed thereafter for the next day's activities. Similarly in the deep sleep state we go back to our resting place and feel very happy and wake up quite refreshed.

Sankara says that in our waking state we are bound by our ignorance, desires and actions (*avidya*, *kama*, and *karma*). First, there is ignorance, *avidya*, and because of our ignorance, we have desires, *kama*, Then our desires create our actions, *karma*, some may be good and some may be bad. All these actions produce results that we have to experience. Thus we get trapped in this cycle of cause and effect, *karya* and *karana*, while we are awake.

But during deep sleep, all these drop off for the time being and both the body and the mind are at rest. All our *upadhis*, our ego and other limiting adjuncts, which make us feel that we are different from others, like I am intelligent and the other is dull, I am beautiful and the other is ugly and so on, are at rest. Our condition then, as Sankara puts it, is *advayam*, *ekam*, *sivam*, *santam*. There is no duality, *advayam*; there is only one i.e. consciousness alone is, *ekam*; that consciousness is peace, *santam* and auspicious, *sivam*. The whole universe which is an offshoot of our ignorance disappears during that short interval of deep sleep.

Mantra 8

prithivii cha prithiviimaatraa chaapashchaapomaatraa cha tejashcha tejomaatraa cha vaayushcha vaayumaatraa chaakaashashchaakaashamaatraa cha chakshushcha drashhtavyam cha shrotram cha shrotavyam cha graanam cha ghraatavyam cha rasashcha rasayitavyam cha tvakcha sparshayitavyam cha vaakcha vaktavyam cha hastau chaadaatavyam chopasthashchaanandayitavyam cha paayushcha visarjayitavyam cha yaadau cha gantavyam cha manashcha mantavyam cha buddhishcha boddhivyam chaahankaarashchaahankartavyam cha chittam cha chetayitavyam cha tejashcha vidyotayitavyam cha praanashcha vidyaarayitavyam cha || 8||

Earth and its subtle counterpart, water and its subtle counterpart, fire and its subtle counterpart, air and its subtle counterpart, akasa and its subtle counterpart, the eye and what can be seen, the ear and what can be heard, the nose and what can be smelt, the taste and what can be tasted, the skin and what can be touched, the organ of speech and what can be spoken, the hands and what can be grasped, the organ of

generation and what can be enjoyed, the organ of excretion and what can be excreted, the feet and what is their destination, the mind (manas) and what can be thought, the intellect (buddhi) and what can be comprehended, the ego (ahamkara) and the object of egoism, the memory (chitta) and its object, knowledge (tejah) and its object, Prana and what is to be supported (all these merge into the Self, Atman).

All the factors that retire in sleep are enumerated in this Mantra which gives us a complete picture in totality of what happens to our physical, mental and intellectual personalities in deep sleep. The universe consists of five basic elements and these elements are in two forms – gross and subtle. They combine with one another in different proportions as per a specified formula called *panchikaranam* to form this phenomenal world. When subtle, each element is called *tanmatra* and in that state the element is known only by its qualities. The phenomenal world is a permutation and combination of these elements. These elements have matching points in our body in the form of sense organs as also their corresponding objects we perceive with such organs. These together constitute the macrocosmic and microcosmic sense organs of knowledge. They are illustrated in the following table. This Mantra says that all these *indriyas* with their objects completely retire in sleep.

GROSS& SUBTLE ELEMENTS AND CORRESPONDING JNANENDRIYAS

NO	GROSS ELEMENTS	SUBTLE ELEMENTS & THEIR OBJECTS	MATCHING SENSE ORGANS
1	Akasa-Space	Sabda-Reception of Sound	Srotra-Ear
2	Vayu-Air	Sparsha-Cognition of Touch	Tvacha-Skin
3	Tejas-Agni-Fire	Rupa-Perception of Forms	Chakshu-Eyes
4	Apah-Water	Rasa-Cognition of Taste	Jihva-Tongue
5	Prithvi-Earth	Gandha-Cognition of Smell	Ghraana-Nose

Not only the sense organs of knowledge but even the organs of action are put out in sleep. The organs of action are five in number each having an independent function of its own as given in the following table. This Mantra tells us that all these instruments of action with their activities retire in deep sleep.

KARMENDRIYAS - ORGANS OF ACTION

NO.	NAME	FIELDS OF EXPERIENCE	PRESIDING DEITY
1	Vaak-Speech	Bhasanam-To Speak	Agni
2	Paani-Hands	Vastu Grahanam-To grasp	Indra
3	Paada-Legs	Gamanam-Locomotion	Vishnu
4	Paayu-Anus	Maalatyaaga-Elimination of waste	Lord Yama
5	Upastha-Genitals	Ananda-Pleasure & Procreation	Prajapati

Apart from the organs of action and knowledge even the inner instruments of perception, feeling and comprehension also retire in sleep. The inner organ mind (*manas*) receives the stimuli through organs of perception from external sources and passes them on to another inner organ called intellect (*buddhi*) which analyses such stimuli received and determines. This is the cognition faculty of the intellect which decides what to do. Another inner organ is called ego or *antahkarana* or I-ness which feels it is the subject of action. The last inner organ is *chitta* or the storehouse of memories which stockpiles the feelings, emotions and impressions we have gathered from our experiences. These are given in detail in the following table. These inner instruments with their independent and individual functions as thinking, determining, illuminating and self-asserting retire in sleep.

ANTHAHKARANA CHATUSHTAYA - FOURFOLD ASPECTS OF MIND

NO.	NAME	FUNCTIONS	NATURE	PRESIDING DEITY
1	Manas	Receives Stimuli through organs of perception from external sources	Indecision or doubt	Moon
2	Buddhi	Analyses situations or stimuli received & determines - Cognition faculty	Decision making	Brahma
3	Ahamkara	Sense of doership & enjoyership	Ego	Rudra
4	Chitta	Recollection of past experiences or events	Storehouse or Memory	Vasudeva

Lastly, the Mantra says that the prana and what is supported by it or enlightened by it also retire. Here prana refers to its activity by which the organs were functioning in the waking state.

To sum up, Mantras 6 to 8 tell us that when the activity of the mind comes to a standstill on account of its being overpowered by the light of Atman it begins to take rest in dreamless sound sleep and it enjoys great happiness that arises in the body. Then everything such as desires, activities, the consciousness of body and senses i.e., all the phenomenal world created by Avidya as determined by cause and effect and consisting of names and forms are merged in the one Atman only, just as birds fly to their nests on the trees at the approach of the night. The enumerations of the features that go to rest during the condition of deep sleep as given in the Mantra 8 are as follows

1. The gross elements of earth, water, fire, air and space.
2. The subtle elements or essences (Tanmatras) out of which they are produced namely, smell, flavor, form, touch and sound.
3. The senses of the eye, the ear, the nose, the tongue and the skin and the objects that can be sensed and known as the visual, the auditory, the olfactory, the gustatory and the tactual.

4. The organs of actions namely the tongue, hands, feet, organs of generation and anus and their activities of speaking, holding, walking, enjoyment and eliminating waste.
5. The mind and its imagining, the intellect and the conceivable ideas, the egoism and all that about which one can be egoistic
6. Attention and that can be attended to
7. Luster and that which can be seen or felt as lustrous
8. The pranas and whatever is supported and sustained by them.

Mantra 9

*eshha hi drashhta sprashhtaa shrotaa ghraataa rasayitaa manta boddhaa kartaa
vigyanaatmaa purushhah | sa pare.akshara aatmani sampratishhthate || 9||*

It is He, verily, who sees, feels, hears, smells, tastes, thinks and knows. He is the doer, the intelligent self, the purusha. He is established in the Highest, the imperishable Atman.

We may recapitulate here the questions raised by the student. They are: Who is it that enjoys the mystery of sleep with no dreams? Where do all these organs rest at the time of deep sleep? This question relates to the state of dreamless sleep, characterized by bliss resulting in the absence of any pain at all. This state is the result of absence of mind's contact with any objects. When a man gets up from dreamless sleep he feels very happy. The point to be understood is who is the experiencer of this blissful state of mind? The experiencer of this bliss is attributed to the undifferentiated cosmic ignorance due to which the Atman remains covered at the time of deep sleep. This was explained in Mantra 6 by using the terms “**the mind is overpowered by light**” and telling us that at this state man is nearest to the Supreme Atman. In other words the experiencer of that state is jivatman.

The Supreme Atman or Pure Consciousness appears through avidya to be conditioned by various *upadhis* and becomes the jiva or embodied soul. It is the jiva because of its association with upadhis like mind, senses etc., becomes the seer, feeler, hearer etc. The jiva may be compared to the image of the sun reflected in the water of a dish. The reflection appears to move or to remain still according to the condition of water. When the water and the dish are removed the reflection of the sun also goes away but not the sun in the sky. Likewise what disappears during deep sleep is the apparent false knowledge of the whole external world as also that of the upadhis of the body, senses, mind, intellect and egoism (collectively called as maya) and not the real nature of the jivatman who is identical with the one blissful, imperishable support of all viz., the Atman. And that is why there is joy in sound sleep. This is to say that the embodied soul realizes his oneness with the Supreme Atman when maya is destroyed.

Mantra 10

*paramevaaksharam pratipadyate sa yo ha vai tadachchhaayamashariiramlohitam
shubhramaksharam vedayate yastu somya | sa sarvagyah sarvo bhavati | tadeshha
shloka || 10||*

He who knows this imperishable Being, bright, without shadow, without body, without color, which is pure and indestructible becomes omniscient and becomes all; the Supreme, indestructible Being he surly attains. For this there is a mantra.

The implication of the discussion in the foregoing Mantras is who is it that is free from the three states of waking, dream and deep sleep and is also the man's final goal? The answer is the imperishable Atman, known as Turiya. All the experiences of waking, dreaming and deep sleep blend together indistinguishably in the imperishable Atman as honey collected from different flowers blend in the honey found in a bee-hive or as rivers blend in the ocean. They are non-different from Atman and disappear in it.

All the same there being no conscious enjoyment of the blissful Atman during deep sleep, but only a natural forgetfulness of the joys and sorrows and of the perishable objects of the world, Pippalada says that whoever becomes free from all desires and realizes that the Atman is both immanent and transcendent, beyond mind and prana, bereft of all qualities, names and forms and as being pure, resplendent and blissful, becomes one with Him and is as omniscient and as all-pervading as the Atman. In support of this concept a Vedic verse is quoted as under.

Mantra 11

*vigyaanaatmaa saha devaishcha sarvaih
praanaa bhutaani sampratishhthanti yatra
tadaksharam vedayate yastu somya
sa sarvagyah sarvamevaavivesheti || 11||*

He, O friend, who knows that imperishable Being wherein rests the intelligent self, together with the gods, the Pranas and the elements - he becomes all - knowing and enters into all.

The idea is that the body and the mind, with all their projections, are rooted in the Self, the Consciousness. The Self sustains all the aspects of the individual and It is the resting place for all of them. The same Self is in each one of us. It is surrounded by the body, the organs and the mind like an emperor by his courtiers. When our identity with the Self is realized we become *Sarvam*, all. We become like a drop of water falling in an ocean. The drop which was having a separate identity loses that separateness and becomes one with ocean when it drops down in it. What was finite becomes infinite. The individual self becomes the cosmic Self.

iti prashnopanishhadi chaturthah prashnah ||

HERE ENDS THE FOURTH QUESTION OF THE PRASNA UPANISHAD.

We shall take up the Fifth Question next time.

HARIH OM

Prasna Upanishad (Part-5):

Why meditate on AUM?

T.N.Sethumadhavan

PREAMBLE

The Upanishad started with the question about this physical world. After knowing the answer, the interest turned on from the physical plane to the mental plane and thereafter to the spiritual plane. The fifth question asked by the student, Satyakama, is about the meditation on AUM (some times written also as OM). Before we go to the question raised by Satyakama it is advisable to have a clear idea about what is meant by meditation and also the significance of the syllable AUM as this section of the Upanishad deals with *pranava upasana* or about meditation on AUM.

MEDITATION

Meditation means the continuous flow of the mind towards Atman through the total exclusion of all ideas foreign to It (The Atman). In meditation the mind becomes steady, like the flame of a lamp set in a windless place. The principal disciplines for meditation as laid down in Patanjali Yoga Sutras are *yama* and *niyama* which are methods of self-control at physical and mental levels. Yama includes non-violence, truthfulness, non-stealing, chastity of body and mind, and non-receiving of gifts. Niyama includes outer and inner purity, contentment, austerity, study of scriptures, and devotion to God. The aspirant should meditate on AUM with great love, regarding it as the symbol of Brahman. The meditation should be practiced as a lifelong vow. For a more detailed discussion on this, readers may refer to the author's article entitled 'Patanjali Yoga Sutras' in this website under the category 'Yoga and Meditation'.

AUM

'Om' is the most sacred mystic symbol. This single syllable incarnation is the most powerful and significant of all the Mantras. The available literature upon the significance of this Vedic Mantra is voluminous. Nowhere in the world can we meet with a more sacred symbol that has got such a vast amount of significance. The word 'Om' has been taken as a symbol and as an aid to meditation by spiritual aspirants from Vedic times which continue even today. It is accepted both as one with Brahman and as the medium (the logos) connecting man and God. This Holy Word is taught in the Upanishads. It signifies Brahman, the divine substratum or ground of existence. It also represents the Atman or the Self.

The sound of 'Om' is also called the 'Pranava', meaning that it is something that pervades life, or runs through Prana or Breath. This cosmic sound is heard in deep meditation. Sound is vibration, which, as the modern science tells us, is at the source of all creations. God is beyond vibration, but vibration, being the subtlest form of His creation, is the nearest we can get to Him in the physical world. Speaking of 'Om', Thaittiriya Upanishad says "Thou art the sheath of Brahman" - that is, Om is the container for the Supreme. So,

invoking Om is invoking the Supreme. It is a sacred Mantra and is to be chanted constantly.

The very central theme of Mandukya Upanishad is the syllable 'Om', through which the mystery of Brahman is gathered to a point. The text of this Upanishad first treats 'Om' in terms of the Upanishadic doctrine of the 3 states of Waking, Dream and Sleep, but then passes on to the fourth 'Turiya', thus transporting us into the classic "Advaita-Vedanta".

In 'Om' there are 3 aspects:

1. The mere sound, the mere Mantra as pronounced by the mouth.
2. The meaning of the syllable, which is to be realized through feeling.
3. The application of 'Om' to our character, singing it in our acts and so through our life.

Om represents the Self, which is the Supreme non-dual Reality. The Self is known in four states of consciousness - namely, the Waking state, the Dream state, the Deep-Sleep state and the fourth state called the 'Turiya'. All these are represented in the three sounds of Om (A, U and M), and the silence that follows and surrounds the syllable. This is illustrated in the following table.

No.	Sound	State of Consciousness
1	'A' First sound of Om. The very first of the letters of the alphabet in all languages	Waking - First state
2	'U' The Middle sound	Dream - Middle state
3	'M' The Final sound	Deep Sleep - Final state
4	Silence- The inevitable between two successive Oms	Turiya - The state of Perfect Bliss

IMPORTANCE OF TURIYA

The law of memory is that the person who remembers and experiences must be one and the same individual, or else memory is impossible. So, as we can remember all our experiences in all the three states, there must necessarily be a single common factor, which was a witness of all the happenings in all the three states. There must be some entity within us, who is present in the waking world, who moves and illumines the dream, who is a distant observer in the deep-sleep world, and yet who is not conditioned by any of these 3 realms. This entity, conceived as the fourth state 'Turiya', is the Real, the Changeless, and the Intelligent Principle.

If properly pronounced, this Om will represent in itself the whole phenomenon of sound production. No other word can do this. As Om is the nearest to God, and is indeed the first manifestation of Divine Wisdom, this Om is truly symbolic of God.

'Om' thus represents the entire manifested world and the unmanifest, and also that which lies beyond both the manifest and the unmanifest - the Brahman, which is the Changeless substratum for the changing objects of the world of experiences.

'Om' is a mono syllable prefixed to every Mantra. Without 'Om', no sacred-chant has its power. A Mantra has no life in it without the addition of the Pranava 'Om'.

The Shloka "*Om iti ekaksharam Brahma--*" of the Bhagavat Gita (8.13) explains the importance of 'Om'. The meaning of the Shloka is: "Anyone uttering the indestructible mono syllable 'Om', the transcendental sound vibration of the Ultimate Truth, remembering me continuously; thus relinquishing his body in this way achieves the Supreme Goal".

Repetition of 'Om' is of different kinds. Generally it is uttered as part of some mantras like "Om Namasivaya" and similar other Vedic mantras as well as many hymns beginning with Omkara. So also sacrifices, acts of penance etc. begin with chanting 'Om'. But sometimes 'Om' is uttered and meditated upon independently. This is called "*Pranavopasana*" and whether all people can adopt this upasana has been controversial.

"*Pranavopasana*" means the repetition of Pranava (OM) by itself (not as part of, or in conjunction with mantras and rites) and the meditation upon its significance - the Supreme Brahman. According to traditional religious teachers this is reserved for Sanyasins only. The reason given is only those who have enough purity of mind and power of concentration can perform this Upasana in the proper way. The gist of the argument is that house holders and people like them lacking in mental purity and concentration on the Absolute are not qualified to perform *Pranavopasana*.

THE TEXT

FIFTH QUESTION

MANTRA 1

*atha hainam saibyah satyakaamah paprachchha | sa yo ha vai
tabhdagavanmanushhyeshhu praayanaantamonkaaramabhidhyaayita | katamam vaava
sa tena lokam jayatiiti | tasmai sa hovaacha || 1||*

Then Satyakama, the son of Sibi, asked Pippalada; Sir, if a person goes on meditating on the syllable AUM throughout his life, which world, verily, does he win by such meditation? Pippalada told him:

Impelled by the desire to know Brahman (Atman), Satyakama, the son of Sibi, thereupon asked Pippalada as to what world is attained by a person who meditates upon Om (AUM) with single-pointed devotion till the end of his life. This question presupposes that meditation on Om is to be carried out throughout one's life and that many are the worlds that spiritual seekers may attain after death. Om is the symbol of both Lower Brahman and the Higher Brahman and a seeker can worship Brahman in any of its aspects. This is explained by the teacher now in the following Mantras.

MANTRA 2

*etadvai satyakaama param chaaparam cha brahma yadonkaarah /
tasmaadvidvaanetenaiyaayanenaikataramanveti || 2||*

He replied: O Satyakama, the syllable AUM is the Supreme Brahman and also the other Brahman. Therefore he who knows it attains, with its support, the one or the other.

Pippalada replied that in as much as Om is the symbol of both the lower and the higher (Saguna and Nirguna) Brahman and as it is very close to both of them, it is deemed to be identical with both. Therefore one who meditates upon it attains to anyone of the Brahmans as he likes.

The words used here are the Supreme Brahman which is Nirguna, devoid of all characteristics and cannot be known through words or thought. It is also called Para Brahman, Higher Brahman. Other Brahman which is Saguna that which is with attributes. It is also called Apara Brahman, Lower Brahman. This is the first manifestation of the Absolute or Pure Consciousness also designated as Hiranyagarbha, Maya and Prana.

Brahman, being transcendental in nature and attributeless, cannot be directly comprehended by our mind. Hence an indirect method is prescribed in the scriptures to meditate on Brahman and one such method is through a symbol or *pratika*. Such a symbol can be thought of in two ways - 1. One as associated with the original and 2. As the thing itself or as good as the original or equivalent to the original. Just as *salagrama* is considered as a symbol of Vishnu, the syllable AUM is considered nearest to the Brahman. Thus by contemplating the Supreme Brahman through AUM, one realizes the highest plane and by using AUM as a symbol one attains the lower plane.

BENEFITS OF CONTEMPLATING ON THE DIFFERENT MATRAS OF AUM

MANTRA 3

*sa yadhyekamaatramabhidhyaayiita sa tenaiva sa.nveditastuurnameva
jagatyaabhisampadhyate | tamricho manushhyalokamupanayante sa tatra tapasaa
brahmacharyena shraddhayaa sampanno mahimaanamanubhavati || 3||*

If he meditates on one letter (matra), then, being enlightened by that alone, he quickly comes back to earth after death. The rik verses lead him to the world of men. By practising austerity, chastity and faith he enjoys greatness.

Though AUM is only one syllable which is to be meditated upon by uttering it as one unit, it can be uttered and meditated upon by using the sounds produced by pronouncing its three different parts (*matras*) viz. A, U, M. While meditating the syllable as a whole leads to the higher Brahman, meditating on its different *matras* leads one to the lower Brahman, the fruit of which is either return to the mortal world or liberation in gradual stages.

The person who meditates on the first matra ‘A’ (sound produced by pronouncing ‘A’, the first letter in the alphabet) is born again in the mortal world and endowed with austerity, chastity and faith enjoys the glory and power of spiritual life. This is possible because the *matra* of AUM indicated by ‘A’ constitutes in essence the hymns of the Rig Veda which alone has the power to bestow human body in the next birth. Thus even those who are ignorant of the meaning of the whole syllable AUM and meditate only on ‘A’ are not deprived of any spiritual reward but reap a good fruit and no calamity befalls on them. Such is the greatness of AUM.

MANTRA 4

atha yadi dvimaatrena manasi sampadhyate so.antariksham yajurbhirunniiyate somalokam.h | sa somaloke vibhutimanubhuuya punaraavartate || 4||

If, again, he meditates on the second letter, he attains the mind and is led up by the yajur verses to the intermediate space, to the Plane of the Moon. Having enjoyed greatness in the Plane of the Moon, he returns hither again.

One who meditates on the second *matra* (sound produced by pronouncing ‘U’) is carried after death by the hymns of Yajur Veda to the world of the moon or mind and after enjoying there the pleasures and glories of that world returns to the mortal world.

MANTRA 5

yah punaretam trimaatrenomityetenaivaaksharena param purushhamabhi- dhyayiiita sa tejasi suurye sampannah | yathaa paadodarastvachaavinirbhuchyata evam ha vai sa paapmanaa vinirbhuktah sa saamabhirunniiyate brahmalokam sa etasmaajjiivaghanaat.h paraatparam purushayam purushhamiikshate | tadetau shlokau bhavatah || 5||

Again, he who meditates on the Highest Person through this syllable AUM consisting of three letters, becomes united with the effulgent Sun. As a snake is freed from its skin, even so he is freed from sin.

As against these two meditators, one who meditates on the third part of AUM, namely ‘M’ which constitutes the hymns of Sama veda is carried after death to the world of the sun, where contemplating on the Purusha in the Sun, he becomes merged and identified with the sun. His sins being burnt, he becomes pure and resplendent as the Sun, just as a serpent lives a new life after casting off its old skin. He is then raised to the Brahmaloaka, the world of Hiranyagarbha who is the support of the whole cosmos. It is this third kind of meditator who gets gradual liberation (*krama mukti*) and becomes one with the Parabrahman.

MANTRA 6

tisro maatraa mriatyumatyah prayuktaa anyonyasaktaah anaviprayuktaah | kriyaasu baahyaabhyantaramadhyamaasu samyak.h prayuktaasu na kampate gyah || 6||

The three letters of AUM, if employed separately, are mortal; but when joined together in meditation on the total Reality and used properly on the activities of the external, internal and intermediate states, the knower trembles not.

Of the three letters of the syllable AUM, 'A' represents the earth, the Rig-Veda and the waking state. 'U' represents the intermediate space, the Yajur-Veda and the dream state. 'M' represents heaven, the Sama-Veda and deep sleep state. Further three deities viz., Virat, Hiranyagarbha and Isvara control the three states respectively.

The seeker meditating on the three letters separately as the symbol of the three deities attains corresponding planes on death. But he who meditates on the entire syllable AUM, keeping in mind his identity with Brahman as also with Virat, Hiranyagarbha and Isvara, attains Brahma Loka and finally Liberation. There is no fear whatsoever for him.

MEDITATION ON THREE SYLLABLES OF AUM IN THEIR TOTALITY IS MEDITATION ON BRAHMAN

MANTRA 7

*rigbhiretam yajurbhirantariksham saamabhiryat.h tat.h kavayo vedayante /
tamonkaarenaivaayatanaanveti vidvaan.h yattachchhaantamajaramamritamabhayam
param cheti || 7||*

The wise man, meditating on AUM, attains this world by means of the rik verses; the intermediate world by means of the yajur verses; and that which is known to the seers by means of the sama verses. And also through the syllable AUM he realizes that which is tranquil, free from decay, death and fear and which is the Supreme.

The three letters (*matras*) of AUM, associated with three sounds, were discussed earlier. There is another aspect of AUM, known as *ardhamatra*, or half-letter, an undifferentiated sound which lingers after the three differentiated sounds die away. This is called the Fourth and is used as the symbol of *Turiya* or Pure Consciousness, the attributeless Brahman.

AUM is the sound symbol of Brahman, the first sound produced at the beginning of creation. The Creator, Brahma, with the help of AUM, manifests the three principal Vedas and the three worlds. Further, the three letters of AUM comprise three feet of the Gayatri. From 'A' was produced the first foot of Gayatri, *tat saviturvarenyam*, - "That which is adored by the sun" - which was expanded into the Rig-Veda; from 'U' the second foot of Gayatri, *bhargo devasya dheemahi*, - "We meditate on That which is the power of the deity" - which was expanded into the Yajur-Veda; and from 'M', the third foot, *dhio yo no prachodayat*, - "May He awaken our consciousness" - which was expanded into the Sama-Veda. The Atharva Veda, dealing mostly with sacrifices and rituals, is excluded from the *Trayi* or Vedic Triad.

The answer to the fifth question concludes with the assertion that the correct method of meditation is to blend all the three syllables and meditate upon them in their totality as ONE BRAHMAN. The meditator should also merge himself in the imperceptible sound in between two successive chants of AUM. Such meditation leads to results which are superior to even those obtained through ritualistic recitation of Vedic Mantras. It leads to That which is tranquil, imperishable, immortal, fearless and Supreme.

iti prashnopanishhadi pajnchamah prashnah //

HERE ENDS THE FIFTH QUESTION OF THE PRASNA UPANISHAD.

We shall take up the Sixth Question next time.

HARIH OM

Prasna Upanishad (Part-6):
Where to look for the Cosmic Person?
T.N.Sethumadhavan

PREAMBLE

The personality of a complete man (I am not referring to the complete man of a popular commercial ad.) comprises of five layers which are referred to in Vedanta as *Panchakosam*.

'Kosa' means a covering or sheath. *Panchakosam* means the Five Sheaths. The scabbard of the sword covers the sword. It is of the same shape as the sword. It indicates the presence of the sword, even though it covers the sword from one's sight. The scabbard is always different from the sword and does not affect the sword in any way. Similarly the Soul or the Self is covered by the five sheaths, as shown in the diagram below. Hence the Self or the Soul is generally referred to as the Indweller.



What are these five Sheaths? They are 1. *Annamaya Kosam* (Food Sheath-Physical Body) 2. *Pranamaya Kosam* (Vital Air Sheath) 3. *Manomaya Kosam* (Mental Sheath) 4. *Vijnanamaya Kosam* (Wisdom or Intellectual Sheath) and 5. *Anandamaya Kosam* (Bliss Sheath) It may be observed from the diagram that we have to discover the Self which is the Reality as beyond the five sheaths. The sixth question raised in this Upanishad is where to find that Reality or the Self? And the answer is "Right here, inside the body".

But before we go to the answer to the question posed, let us have a closer look at the coverings so as to get a feel of That which is being covered.

Annamaya Kosam

'Annam' means food and 'maya' means modifications. The body is the result of modification of food and hence called 'Annamaya'. The food eaten is digested. Its very essence becomes the source of new life. The child grows up and develops in strength and size due to the food eaten. Finally, we die to merge into food (Earth). The earth itself becomes the food we eat. So, we are born from food (earth) and go back to food (earth). When we identify with the Annamaya Kosa, we say-"I am tall, fair, healthy, beautiful, strong etc." Annamaya Kosam is our **Gross Body** (*Sthula Sariram*).

Pranamaya Kosam

The Vital Air Sheath pervades the Food Sheath. It is subtler than the food sheath. The five modifications of air, which control the main physiological functions of the body, are called 'Pranas'. They are: a) *Prana* b) *Apana* c) *Vyana* d) *Udana* and e) *Samana*. The five Pranas and the five organs of action together are called the 'Pranamaya Kosam'. Identified with it, a man says-" I am hungry, thirsty etc."

Manomaya Kosam

The Mind and the five sense organs of perception together form the mental sheath. The mind is the seat of emotions like anger, love, jealousy, compassion etc. It is constituted of thoughts in a state of volition. It is the mind that perceives the objects of the world through the senses. If the mind does not back the sense organs, they cannot receive any stimuli. My eyes may be open; but I miss to see the object in front of me if my mind is elsewhere. It is only through the mind that the organs of action also respond to the world. Identified with the mental sheath, I say "I am happy, I am sad, I cannot hear etc."

Vijnanamaya Kosam

The intellect and the five sense organs of perception together is the Intellectual Sheath. It is subtler than and pervades the former three sheaths. It controls them as well. The five senses are common to both the mental and intellectual sheaths, as perception involves both the mind and the intellect.

Thoughts in a framework of decision-making are the intellect. Ignorance of the Self manifests first as the decision of the intellect as "I am the doer, I am finite etc.". This then gives rise to the notions -"I am tall, I am hungry, I am happy etc." Knowledge of the Self also takes place in the intellect as "I am infinite, I am pure happiness etc." The intellect is the seat of the values of life. What we value, we try to emulate, run after or cherish. The intellect discriminates between right and wrong, real and unreal, good and bad etc. To innovate, create, discover, visualize, imagine, observe,

conclude, inquire, question, recognize, assimilate etc. are intellectual abilities. The mind carries the sense perception to the intellect. Based on previous experience, it recognizes, understands and decides on the course of action. It conveys the same, through the mind, to the organs of action and the body to act accordingly. Hence, the intellect is called the 'Driver' of this vehicle of the body.

The Pranamaya Kosam, Manomaya Kosam and the Vijnanamaya Kosam together form our **Subtle Body** (*Sukshma Sariram*).

Anandamaya Kosam

The subtlest and the most pervasive of the five sheaths is the Bliss Sheath. It is otherwise called the **Causal Body** (*Karana sariram*). It is of the nature of ignorance of the world and the Self, yet endowed with the bliss of the Self.

When night falls, the world is covered by darkness. All objects and their distinctive characteristics merge into it. The objects are not destroyed. Only they are not perceived. As the day dawns, the distinctions manifest. Similarly, in deep sleep when only the causal body is at play, all dualities, the ego, anxiety, agitation, the world, the subtle and gross bodies etc. merge into total ignorance. Due to ignorance, it is said to be of impure nature.

The five sheaths form the covering, which conceals the jewel of the Self in its folds. They are modifications of the elements, born to die and are known to be different from 'I' - the pure Self. The self is beyond all modifications, unborn, immortal and the witness of all. The Self is neither happy nor unhappy. It is always of the nature of pure bliss. We are thus different from the five sheaths.

Beyond the five Sheaths

The five sheaths are known by the Self as 'my body', 'my prana', 'my mind', 'my intellect', 'my bliss' and are, therefore, not the Self. The fact that 'I am not the five sheaths' is simple. But the most simple facts are the most difficult to grasp and accept. Our mind is so complicated and the habits of the past are so over-powering that one does not see the Truth. Even if the Truth is appreciated, it is not accepted. Even if it is accepted, it is not owned up to. Therefore, through continuous discrimination and firm resolve, one must uncover the Self and get liberated from the bondage of the five sheaths.

Self, Consciousness, Creator, Atman, Brahman, Absolute and Prajapati are some of the terms used to refer to this One Ultimate Reality. The word used by the student, Sukesa Bharadvaja is *Purusha* or Cosmic Person.

THE TEXT

SIXTH QUESTION

MANTRA 1

*atha hainam sukeshaa bhaaradvajah paprachchha | bhagavan.h hiranyanaabhah
kausalyo raajaputro maamupetyaitam prashnamaprichchhata | shhodashakalam
bhaaradvaja purushham vettha | tamaham kumaarambruvam naahamimam veda |
yadhyahamimamavedishham katham te naavakshyamiti | samuulo vaa eshha
parishushhyati yo.anritamabhivadati tasmaannaarhamyanritam vaktum.h | sa tuushhniim
rathamaaruhya pravavraaja | tam tvaa prichchhaami kvaasau purushha iti || 1||*

Then Sukesha, the son of Bharadvaja, said to Pippalada: Sir, Hiranyabha, the prince of Kosala, once came to me and asked this question: "O son of Bharadvaja, do you know the Person with sixteen parts?" I said to the prince: "I do not know Him; if I knew Him, why should I not tell you? Surely he who speaks what is not true perishes away completely; therefore I will not speak what I do not know." Then the prince silently mounted his chariot and went away. Now I ask you, sir: Where does that Purusha dwell?

Sukesha started the question by narrating an anecdote. This is intended to point out the difficulty involved in acquiring knowledge of the Absolute and to emphasize that he who does not know should not try to teach. The question was where can the Cosmic Person, *Purusha*, of sixteen parts (*kalas*), be found?

MANTRA 2

*tasmai sa hovaacha | ihaiivaantahshariire sobhya sa purushho yasminnataah
shhodashakalaah prabhavantiiti || 2||*

Pippalada replied: That Person - He from whom these sixteen parts arise - is verily here within the body.

The teacher answered that Purusha is the inner Self, the *pratyagatma*, of the living being. Atman dwells in the space, *akasa*, within the heart, which is shaped like a lotus bud. It is to be sought as the first principle within the man himself and not elsewhere. The sixteen parts will be narrated in the 4th Mantra.

Sankara says that the Purusha, though without any parts, appears to have parts, which are called *upadhis*, adjuncts, when conditioned through *avidya*. Through ignorance alone the parts are seen to arise from, exist in and disappear into the Purusha. The Purusha, Brahman, is completely undifferentiated, pure and non-dual. He is formless and without any parts.

MANTRA 3

*sa iikshaachakre | kasminnahamutkraanta utkraanto bhavishhyaami kasminvaa
pratishhtite pratishhtasyaamiiti || 3||*

The Purusha reflected: "By what means shall I depart the body? By what means shall I stay in the body?"

The order in which the parts were evolved is described next. The parts were said to have originated from the Purusha, meaning thereby that they are not his limbs but his manifestations or his limiting adjuncts. They are the means by which he gets himself experienced in human life. The creation of the parts was mentioned here for the purpose of revealing the Purusha.

MANTRA 4

sa praanamasrijata praanaachchhraddhaam kham vaayurjyotiraapah prithiviindriyam manah | annamannaadviryam tapo mantraah karma lokaa lokeshhu cha naama cha || 4||

He created Prana; from Prana faith, space, air, fire, water, earth, the organs, mind, food; from food virility, austerity, the Vedic hymns, sacrifice, the worlds; and in the worlds He created names.

The sixteen parts or the manifestations of the Self are as follows: 1. Life Principle, *Prana* 2. Faith, *Shraddha* 3-7. Five Elements, space, air, fire, water and earth 8. Five senses of perception and five organs of action considered as one 9. Mind 10. Food 11. Vigor 12. Self-discipline, *Tapas* 13. Worship or prayers, *mantra* 14. Work, *karma* 15. Wisdom, or spiritual worlds representing different states of consciousness and 16. Name or a distinct identity.

The sixteen parts are created through avidya. These created entities are unreal, like the objects seen in a dream. After the destruction of avidya they again merge in the Purusha losing their names and forms as illustrated in the next Mantra.

MANTRA 5

sa yathemaa nadhyah syandamaanaah samudraayanaah samudram praapyaastam gachchhanti bhidhyete taasaam naamarupe samudra ityevam prochyate | evamevaasya paridrashhturimaah shhodashakalaah purushhaayanaah purushham praapyaastam gachchhanti bhidhyete chaasaam naamarupe purushha ityevam prochyate sa eshho.akalo.amrito bhavati tadeshha shlokaah || 5||

As these flowing rivers, bound for the ocean, disappear into the ocean after having reached it, their names and forms being destroyed and are called simply the ocean - even so, these sixteen parts of the seeker, whose goal is the Purusha, disappear into the Purusha after having reached Him, their names and forms get merged and are called simply the Purusha. He becomes free of parts and immortal. On this there is the following verse:

The sixteen parts enumerated here are representative of the multitude of manifestations which constitute the cosmos. They all originate from the Unmanifest Absolute and eventually they all dissolve into the Unmanifest Absolute. This has been illustrated by the teacher with the analogy of rivers reaching their destination in the ocean and losing their individual identity of names and forms.

The import of this Mantra is that the universe and all living beings are projected, through avidya, from Brahman. Through avidya, again, names and forms are superimposed upon them to serve the practical business of daily life. When the names and forms are destroyed by knowledge, the living beings are realized to be Brahman alone. Thus the knowledge of the Purusha leads to Immortality.

MANTRA 6

*araa iva rathanaabhau kalaa yasminpratishhtitaah / tam vedhyam purushham veda yatha
maa vo mrityuh parivyathaa iti || 6||*

Know Him, the Purusha, who alone is to be known and in whom the parts rest firm, like the spokes in the nave of a wheel, that death may not affect you.

Purusha, the Cosmic Person, Absolute Being, is the support of all his manifestations just as the spokes are being supported by the hub of a wheel. If a man has not known the Purusha as his inmost Self, he becomes stricken with death and suffers.

MANTRA 7

taan.h hovaachaitaavadevaahametat.h param brahma veda / naatah paramastiiti || 7||

Pippalada said to them: Thus far, indeed, I know the Supreme Brahman; there is nothing higher than this.

The instructions of the teacher have come to an end. The teacher made the students feel that the purpose of their seeking guidance from him has been completely accomplished.

MANTRA 8

*te tamarchayantastvam hi nah pitaa yo.asmaakamavidhyaayaah param param
taarayasiiti / namah paramarishhibhyo namah paramarishhibhyah || 8||*

And they, worshipping him, said: You, indeed, are our father - you who have taken us across our ignorance to the other shore. Adoration to the supreme Rishis! Adoration to the supreme Rishis!

The concluding Mantra contains another innovative example to be followed by the sincere students. The disciples thank Pippalada for ferrying them across the sea of ignorance to the shores of wisdom. They also state that his spiritual discourse has been like a second birth for them and accordingly they acknowledge him as their father. The repetition of the word 'Rishi' is to show their high regards and respect to the great seers who first realized the knowledge of Brahman and transmitted it through a succession of teachers.

The concluding remarks of Adi Sankaracharya, the great commentator of the Upanishads, in this connection are really magnificent and hence it will be pertinent to quote them in full here.

“Thus instructed by the teacher, the pupils realized that their purpose was accomplished; they felt that they were blessed indeed. But they realized that no earthly return was adequate for the Knowledge received. Therefore they worshipped him with flowers and touching his feet with their heads, said ‘You are truly our father, you have today begotten, through knowledge, our Brahman Body, eternal, undecaying, immortal and fearless. By means of the bout of knowledge you have taken us across the ocean of ignorance - characterized by perverse knowledge and filled with the manifold miseries of birth, old age, disease and death - to the other shore of Liberation, from where one returns no more to *samsara*. Therefore it is proper that we regard you alone as our real father - nay more than any other father. If the earthly father, who begets the body only, is considered most worshipful in the world, what need to be said of him who is the giver of supreme fearlessness?’ ”

iti prashnopanishhadi shhashthah prashnah //

HERE ENDS THE SIXTH QUESTION OF THE PRASNA UPANISHAD

HERE ENDS THE PRASNA UPANISHAD

HARIH OM

The Peace Chant

Om. May we, O gods, hear with our ears what is auspicious! May we, O worshipful gods, see with our eyes what is good! May we, strong in limbs and body, sing your praise and enjoy the life allotted to us by Prajapati!

Om. Peace! Peace! Peace!

<<<()()>>>

15th August, 2011