

**Kenopanishad**  
**Suumary of Discourses by Pujya Guruji, Swami Tejomayananda**  
**Tuesday, July 13, 2004 – Saturday, July 17, 2004**

Kenopanishad is found in the Sāma Vedā. The spiritual significance of this Upanishad is great because Ādi Śankarācaryaji considered it necessary to write two commentaries on this text, namely *pada-bhashya* and *vakya-bhasya*.

Anything that we study is *vidyā*, but whereas all other fields of study like Physics or Chemistry provide us with knowledge of the world of objects, the subject of the Upanishads is *Brahma Vidyā* (knowledge of the one self-existent Being). The goal of this study is to impart *ātma jñāna* (knowledge of the self). Through the study of Kenopanishad, we are trying to discover the truth of the Ultimate Reality, which is none other than our own Self.

Who is a qualified student to gain this knowledge?

A qualified student is one who has:

- Ability to discriminate between the real and unreal (*viveka*)
- Dispassion towards the unreal and the ability to renounce it (*vairāgya*)
- *Śraddha* (faith) and other noble qualities such as control of the mind and sense organs, observance of one's duties, endurance and single-pointedness of the mind
- Intense longing for liberation (*mumukṣutvam*)

Kenopanishad begins with a peace invocation. In this peace invocation we are praying to the Lord for His grace to grant us good health and all the qualities that are required for a *sādhaka* (spiritual seeker). May we not deny the existence of this Reality. May He not deny His grace to us. May we be conscious of these qualities and cultivate them consciously.

The *Upanishad* starts with a question - what or who is giving light to all these visible physiological processes? This question touches transcendental reality. When we begin to reflect upon this question, we discover that there a force even beyond the mind itself. What is that force that is even beyond the mind itself? Or, to state the question in a different way, "What is Consciousness?" Our study of this subject leads us to the following questions:

- Is there such a truth or reality?
- If there is, then is that consciousness a property i.e. a product of something OR is it an *independent* reality?
- Is that consciousness a *finite* entity or *infinite* i.e. unlimited?
- What is my relationship with that consciousness? Is it me or am I a part of it?

The answer is clear and to the point, "He is the ear of the ear," the supreme Power behind all our powers of cognition. This divine entity is not recognized by us because of our preoccupation and identification with the ego. It is the function of the Upanishad to point out the Truth and the means to realize that Truth.

What we perceive as an assemblage of objects must have a master behind it for whose use the parts have been assembled and without whom the parts are inert. The master is not the sum of the parts, not subject to objectification, but is infinite, indivisible and independent of the parts. It is His presence that enlivens the parts and allows them to perform their functions. If we identify ourselves with the parts, then we feel ourselves to be limited and bound entities. By removing the identification with the body, mind and intellect, we can go beyond the limitations of time and space and attain immortality

(*amṛtābhavanti*). This can only be achieved by the one who is wise and not provoked by adverse situations (*dhīra*). What are the practical implications of this state of immortality? Freedom from fear.

This Reality is beyond the reach of our instruments of perception and cognition. It is that because of which all the instruments of body, mind and intellect exist and function, yet It cannot be perceived, described, understood or conceptualized by them. The moment we try to do so, we give It an object-like status. Not only that, the Master here says that we do not know how to teach anyone about It because this knowledge is distinct from and beyond the realms of the known and unknown. It is known only to those who do not know It as an object, but not known to those who proclaim they know It.

The gateway to this knowledge is opened for us by the Master in His great love and compassion in the fourth *mantra* of the second section where he tells us that *Brahman* is revealed in every thought modification. This *ātman* is the witness and illuminator of all our experiences, yet distinct from them. The realization of this entity within us gives us inner strength (*vīryam*) and this knowledge leads us to immortality (*amṛtam*) here and now.

The parable in the third section is a symbolic representation of the truth that has been discussed so far in the prior *mantras*. After the *devas* gain a victory over the demons, *Brahman* appears in the form of a *yakṣa* to bless them. Unable to recognize Him, they first send *Agni*, and then *Vayu* to find out the identity of the divine stranger, but both are vanquished. Then Lord Indra, representing the mind, goes to find out the identity of the mysterious stranger. The *yakṣa* disappears, but Indra remains steadfast and waits with patience and humility. In the *yakṣa*'s place, he sees Uma Haimavati, representing the guru and Mother *Śruti*. This story indicates to us that the Truth cannot be known by the instruments of action or perception or even the mind, but is revealed to a spiritual seeker when he is ready by the grace of the guru and the scriptures.

How can one describe this *Brahman*? From the macrocosmic level, He is described as a flash of enlightening lightning. He is described as the most adored, worshipful one (*tadvanam*).

How do we gain this knowledge? By the practice of *tapa* (penance), *dama* (self-control) and *karma* (selfless action). *Tapa* is a means of conservation of energy because it helps us to focus on one area. Then, by the practice of *dama*, we do not allow the energy that has been conserved to get dissipated in futile and damaging experiences. What naturally flows then is selfless actions. Living a life of sacrifice rather than one of compromise will benefit us and the world around us as well. The one who knows this great Truth and abides in It lives a guilt-free life of supreme Bliss.