

Rumination of Human Values in the Light of the *Kathopanishad*

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ABSTRACT

Ancient Indian culture and civilization was based on values. In old Indian scriptures we find domination of values in every sphere of human life. *Kaṭhapaniṣad* inculcates all kinds of human values like *satya*, *tapas*, *dāna*, tenderness towards all creatures, patience, humanity, purity, contentment, decency, gentleness of speech, friendliness and freedom from envy etc. The Upaniṣads inspire the feeling of love for God. It provides purity in mind, which is also known as devotion. The love for God always inspires one to do something good for the society.

KEY WORDS

Kaṭhapaniṣad, *satya*, *tapas*, *dāna*, *prema*, *brahmacharya* etc.

INTRODUCTION

The upaniṣads are the store house of Indian wisdom having a universal approach. The Upaniṣadic concept of integration helps to embrace the whole humanity in its sweeping vision of kinship and oneness. The teachings of Upaniṣads unite the whole universe into one bond of universal love and service by inculcating human values. Ancient Indian culture and civilization was based on values. In old Indian scriptures we find domination of values in every sphere of human life. Values help in the maintenance of peace of harmony. It stands for ideals of life. Values are the principles that they lay a solid foundation for a civilized and caring society. All kinds of values make our lives prosperous and happy. Ten principal Upaniṣads are very much significant in respect of discussing the importance of cultivation of these values. Like all the

Upaniṣads, *Kaṭhapaniṣd* also produce the adequate energy for character building by removing all evil thoughts from mind. Ethical values are the core of an honest and noble living. The Upaniṣads tries to establish humanism through the practice of human values. The ultimate moral ideal of the Upaniṣads is the renunciation of egoistic tendencies and disinterested service of humanity at large. To one in such a state of inner purity, there is no thought of ‘mine’ and there grows the feeling of kindness, compassion etc.

THE HUMAN VALUES REFLECTED IN THE KATHOPANIṢAD

Upaniṣads inculcate all kinds of ethical values like *satya*, *tapas*, *dāna*, tenderness towards all creatures, patience, humanity, purity, contentment, decency, gentleness of speech, friendliness and freedom from envy etc. Ten principal Upaniṣads are very much significant in respect of discussing the importance of cultivation of these values. The *Kaṭhapaniṣd* tries to establish humanism through the practice of human values. Here in the following pages a modest attempt is made to highlight the various kinds of human and ethical values reflected in the *Kaṭhapaniṣd*.

SATYA

Satya or truthfulness in speech is one of the essential requirements for upholding the quality of kindness in the society. Truthfulness means straightforwardness in thought, word and deed. The *Yoga Sutra* clearly states on the concept of *satya* as ‘*satyapraṭiṣṭhāṁ kriyāphalāśrayam*’¹ which means truthfulness results in fulfillment without fail. It can create the welfare and harmony for the mankind. From the time immortal openness, frankness, straightforwardness, righteousness, honesty and integrity etc. are regarded as the virtues of truth. Truth brings love and sympathy, equality and fraternity in a society. It is truth which increases faith among the members of the society. From the feeling of truthfulness, honesty, punctuality, cleanliness, orderliness, simplicity etc arise. Truthfulness is the protector of all kinds of duplicity, cunningness and hypocrisy. It saves one from many a false step and makes him work hard to get sound knowledge. Thus truthfulness brings welfare to the entire mankind. Regarding the concept *satya*, *Mahābhārata* also says that truthfulness in speech is one of the great moral

virtues which should be followed by one in day to day life.² In the *Manusṛiti*, Manu reveals that one who speaks the truth as a witness, goes to the heaven after death and acquires an excellent fame in this life also.³

The Upaniṣads believe in the power of truth. Truth is the foundation of Upanisadic literature. It is the eternal value upon which the thought of *ahimsā* based. The Upaniṣads say that, like the *Brahman*, truth also conveys a unitary, homogeneous and non-dual nature. In the number of passages in the Upaniṣads truth is identified with the Brahman as '*brahmanan nāma satyam*'⁴ which means truth is the proper name of Brahman, '*Satyam Brahma*'⁵ (Brahman is truth) *Satyam jñānamanantam brahma*⁶ (Brahman is truth, knowledge, infinity) etc. The *Kaṭhopaniṣd* describes the significance and importance of the feeling of *satya* in human life. In this upaniṣad, we find immense importance of the concept *satya* through the bold character of Naciketa who depicts the supreme value of truthfulness. The upaniṣad aims at inculcating the knowledge of Brahman, which alone enables a man to attain immortality. The Upaniṣad send out a clarion call to elevate us from the level of animal to the level of man as man. It asks us to arise awake and enlighten ourselves by approaching the great ones.⁷ This is a clarion call which the man of to day needs most to carry him out of the impasse created by him by his own follies. The *Kaṭha* accords high values of truths where Yama the lord of deacease appreciated Naciketa for his endeavor to search for the truth. Naciketa an embodiment of truth was fearless because of his love for ultimate truth i.e. Brahman. He has no fear for death and he was even ready to do anything and go anywhere for the sake of truth. Naciketa indicated that neither his forefathers nor the righteous people of his own time ever deviated from truth⁸ and that only wicked people practiced falsehood. Therefore Naciketa asked his father to follow the path of truth and send him to the Abode of death.⁹

In the *Kaṭha*, emphasis has been laid on showing utmost homage for a guest. In the absence of Yama, Naciketa waited for him for three nights without taking any food. As Yama returns and came to know of it, he felt great regret and received him with great respect. The harm that befell a householder for being inhospitable to guest was described by yama's ministers in the *Kaṭhopaniṣad*.¹⁰ Thus the Upaniṣad says that guest never be neglected and should be provided with good hospitality.

PREMA

Prema or Love is the preference of other beings to one's self. *Prema* helps to be compassionate, kindness and also affectionate towards all living being. Love exists in the heart of everyone. One who keeps his mind absorbed in thought of the almighty alone, one find Him easily in his own heart feels that every living being is a part of the God. This kind of sentiment always brings benevolence, compassion, love etc. in human minds. All objects of the world should be treated with true love because of the same self to which they are related. The Upaniṣads carry the message of love for all as one's own self upon which the feeling of *ahimsā* based.

The concept of *prema* of Upaniṣads teaches to serve the poor, the afflicted and the needy. It is truly unselfish love. In love there is no place for lust, envy, rivalry or restrictions. It is purely an eternal feeling. The Upaniṣads inspire the feeling of love for God. It provides purity in mind, which is also known as devotion. The love for God always inspires one to do something good for the society. The great epic *Mahābhārata* also teaches the lessons of importance of love in life. It conveys its lesson that hatred breeds hatred, that covetousness and violence tend inevitably to ruin, that only real conquest is the battle against one's lower nature. The concept of love of Upaniṣads, *Mahābhārata* etc have a universal appeal for the mankind. Like all other Upaniṣads, the *Kaṭhōpaniṣad* also announces the message of love, co-operation, austerity etc. It says that the same *ātman* resides in the cave of the heart of every being¹¹. The self is like something hidden in the darkness of the cave. One who perceives the self through his intellect, he perceive it as light. Thereafter he cannot discriminate between anything and beholds every being and everything as the same self.

TAPAS

The term *tapas* means willful and cheerful discipline of the mind and the senses which is a necessary requirement for the attainment of higher truths and values of life. It is one of the means of cleaning all impurities of mind. In the Upaniṣads, the word *tapas* means nothing but the value and utility in the spheres of the intellectual, moral and spiritual evolution of man. The

Upaniṣads say that *tapas* plays an important role for spiritual development of human being. *Tapas* does not mean self torture to achieve anything. *Tapas* can bring welfare to the society. *Ṛg Veda* also proclaims the glory of austerity. It says the whole universe is born out of an austerity.¹² *Tapas* is a great virtue. Proper practice of *tapas* makes human beings perfect and on accounts of that perfectness he realizes the Supreme being easily, the ultimate happiness of human life. In the *Kaṭhopaniṣad* Yama says to Naciketā that *tapas* proclaims the glory of Brahman and thereby exert the supreme peace of human life. It helps to annihilate the lethargy, lust and other distracting thoughts. It makes one honest and thereby he becomes the true servant of the almighty. He understands Brahman and never keeps hatred and jealousy in mind towards anybody which directly teaches us to go in the path of *Ahimsā*.

BRAHMACHARYA

The Upanisadic message teaches to live an honest life, which definitely aims to prepare a meaningful life useful for the society. The *Kaṭhopaniṣad* teaches to live an honest life, which definitely aims to prepare a meaningful life useful for the society. This Upaniṣad says that the life of *brahmacharya* is undertaken for the realization of the Ātman.¹³ *Brahmacharya* will certainly help to impart man-making and character building education for the young students. Its practice from the beginning of human life teaches the best way for right living in a society including inculcating of all kinds of ethical values.

The first very chapter of the *Kaṭhopaniṣad* also indicates about the another ethical value like charity, that must be accompanied with a pure and honest mind. It is the means for self elevation and self realization. The thing that is to be donated must be necessary and useful for the acceptor. Unnecessary and useless things should never be donated. In this Upaniṣad, when some old and unproductive cows were being carried to give the priests and brāhmaṇas by his father, Naciketa is very unhappy. He considers that one who offers useless things can never satisfy anyone, rather he earns miseries for his life. He later enters such worlds that are full of sorrow and joyless.¹⁴

DAMA

Dama is the both internal and external discipline viz., the discipline of the senses and mind. Thus with sense-control and mind control *dama* also includes the control over one's self. Through the message of *dama* the Upaniṣads utter that man's desire should not get out of control and transcend the limit of *dharma*. The peace and prosperity of a society, culture and civilization of man rests on the feeling of *ahimsā*(nonviolence) to a great extent . From the sensation of *ahimsā*, all kinds of virtuous deeds like *śānti*(tranquility), *titikṣā*(endurance), *dayā* (compassion), *dhṛt*(patience), *svādhāya*(study of the scripture), *akrodha*(non-anger), *ārjava*(uprightness) *uparati*(non-attachments) etc arises. In the Upaniṣads *dama* is presented as the combination of both the man who is unable to control the mind and the senses properly cannot realize the *ātman*.¹⁵ He is like the wicked horse of the charioteer,¹⁶ and cannot keep good thoughts in mind. The *Kaṭhōpaniṣad* further says “one who has not ceased from wicked ways, whose senses are not subdued, whose mind is not concentrated, whose mind is not free from anxiety, doesn't obtain the *ātman*, the true soul, not even by knowledge.¹⁷

Proper practice of *dama* brings success in life, produces vigor and destroys evil thinking of mind. This Upaniṣad says that a disciplined mind helps to disclose the glory of the innermost self of man.

CONCLUSION

Ethical values play a very major role in the development of spiritual life of Indian people. It is an important element in Indian culture. Ethical values help to promote complete perfect continence in mind and temper including thought, speech and action. These also convey the sense of sense-control, cleanliness, self-discipline, piety and temperance. *Kaṭhōpaniṣad* tries to establish humanism through the practice of human values. The ultimate moral ideal of this Upaniṣad is the renunciation of egoistic tendencies and disinterested service of humanity at large. To one in such a state of inner purity, there is no thought of 'mine' and there grows the feeling of kindness, compassion etc. Service to the mankind is one of the conspicuous messages of the Upaniṣads. For the Upaniṣads, realization of the identity and non- separateness of the soul within with the soul without is the basis of universal love and free service. The sense of separateness

from the permanent soul keeps rising all kinds of selfish desires. The sense of non-separation helps to raise the feeling of universal friendship, benevolence towards other beings, peace and blessedness within oneself. When a person has learnt the lesson of brotherhood and fellow-feeling, of love and service, by way of 'dying to live', his self in the process goes on expanding larger and larger and in the end it includes within its fold the entire universe. He identifies himself with one and all. For him the universe is a big family.

FOOT NOTES

- 1) *Yoga Sutra*. 2.36
- 2) *ahiṃsā satyavacanāṃ dānaṃ... nānaśanāt paraṃ. Mahābhārata, Śānti parva* 161.8.
- 3) *satyam sākṣye bruvan sākṣi lokānāpnoti puṣkalān.*
iha cānuttamām kirttiṃ vāgeṣā vrahmapūjitā. Manu Smṛti (MS)VIII. 81.
- 4) *Chāndogyopaniṣad*. VIII.3.4.
- 5) *Brhadāranyakopaniṣad*. U. V.4.1
- 6) *Taittiriopaniṣad* II. 1.1.
- 7) *uttiṣthat jāgrata prāpya vorānnibodhat. kaṭhopaniṣad*, 1.3.14)
- 8) *anupaśya yathā pūrve pratipaśya tathā'pare. Ibid., I.1.6*
- 9) *pālayātmanaḥ satyam. preṣaya mām yamāyetyabhiprāyaḥ. Sbh on Ibid.*
- 10) *āśāpratīkṣe sangatāṃ sūnṛtām.... Yasyānaśnan vasati brāhmaṇo gr̥he. Ibid., I.1.8.*
- 11) *nihito guhāyām. Ibid., I.2.20*
- 12) *ṛtam ca satyam cābhīddhāttapaso'dhya-jāt. R̥gveda.X. 190.1*

13) *yadicchanto brahmacaryam caranti*. Ibid., I.2.15

14) *anandā nāma te lokāstān sa gacchati tā dadat*. Ibid., I.1.3

15) Ibid., I.3.3-9.

16) *yastvavijnānavān bhavatyayuktena... duṣṭāśvā iva sāratheḥ*. Ibid., I.3.5

17) *nāvirato duṣcaritānnāśānto nāsamāhitaḥ*.

nāśāntamānaso vāpi prajñānenainamāpnuyāt. Ibid., I.2.24

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