

8 Prasnopanishad – Answers to the Fourth and Fifth Students

Remove the impurities of the mind, and
Fill your heart with supremely pure feelings.
The eye of wisdom will reveal to you that
The world is filled with the light of Brahman.

Why does a Self-Realised person need penance?
Of what need is spiritual effort to one who adheres
to Truth?

Does a guileless person need to do sacrifices and
rituals?

These words of Sai convey the path of truth.

Birth and death are natural, inevitable. Bhargava, who had recognised the mystery of birth and death, grasped the secrets of the north and south paths (*uttaraayana* and *dakshinaayana*), who knew the significance of the bright and dark fortnights, was filled with contentment and bliss upon listening to Pippalada's wisdom. He bowed to the sage in humility and expressed heartfelt gratitude.

Awareness during sleep

At this point, the fourth disciple, Souryaayani, the grandson of Surya, approached Pippalada. "Swami, when the countless beings of the world sleep, who sleeps in reality? Who is awake then? Who dreams? Who forgets the body and mind and gets immersed in the awareness in a blissful state? When a living being (*praani*) sleeps, how are they able to sustain the life force (*prana*)? Kindly impart these secrets to me and help me attain tranquility," he prayed.

Pippalada spoke, "Souryaayani! When the sun sets, it appears as if he withdraws his rays into himself. The next morning, he sends them forth again for the benefit of mankind. In the same way, the senses recede into the mind during sleep. That is why one cannot see, talk, hear, or taste while in slumber. The senses and their functions are dormant. However, the five life forces¹ (*pranas*) are awake as five fires within the body. For example, inhalation and exhalation, which are involuntary, are possible because of the life force called *samana* (the digestive air).

The individual soul (*jivi*) experiences the peace of sleep. Man relives past and present sights and experiences in dreams. Impressions from countless past births, which are unknown to the individual, also emanate from the consciousness during dreams. Therefore, the five

life forces (*pranas*) are awake during sleep. One creates oneself during dreams. One also creates others and the environment, and undergoes illusory experiences. The mind is the root cause. The mind alone is responsible for bondage and liberation (*Mana eva manushyaanaam karanam bandha mokshayo*). The mind is the reason for dreams and deep sleep.

The nature of pranava (Om)

When Pippalada had satisfied Souryaayani with such answers, the fifth student, Satyakaama, son of Sibi, came to the sage and said, "Swami! The scriptures assert that a person who is able to repeat the *pranava*² during the last breath attains the indestructible (*akshara*) state of immortality. Is this true? Is this possible?"

Pippalada said, "Son, Satyakaama, the whole cosmos is permeated with *pranava*. *Pranava* is the manifestation of God. The sounds of *a*, *u* and *m* constitute the *pranava*. The physical world (*bhoo loka*), the higher astral world (*bhuvan loka*), and the highest world (*sva loka*) — these three worlds are pervaded by *pranava*. The *Rig*, *Yajur*, and *Sama Vedas* are also contained within the *pranava*. These three *Vedas* sing their song through the medium of *Om*.

Note the triples. *Bhoo-Bhuvah-Suvah* are the three worlds. *Rig-Yajur-Sama* are the three *Vedas*. A-U-M are the three primary sounds (*maatras*). The *pranava* alone pervades the three worlds, the three *Vedas*. It is also said that the *pranava* is characterized by eight kinds of prosperity (*ashta aishvarya*).

God as sound, in living and non-living beings,
In light and speech,
Eternal happiness, transcendental principle,
Power of delusion, auspiciousness,
Prosperity, permanent awareness —
These are the characteristics of *Om*.

All sounds in this world are born from *Om* alone. Those who deem *Om* to be just a sound, those who do not go beyond its mechanical recitation, receive only worldly benefits from its repetition. But those who contemplate on the significance of *Om* while chanting it with concentration are eligible to live in the pleasure-filled world, lunar world (*chandra loka*) after death, so say the scriptures.

¹ *Prana, apana, samana, udana, and vyana* — see previous discourse.

² *Om*, the first sound of Creation.

Sun and moon principles

The lunar world (*chandra loka*) is not to be confused with the physical moon, which astronauts from America and Russia have set foot on! From His mind emerged the moon and from His eyes, the sun (*Chadramaa manaso jaatah, chakshoh sooryo ajaayata*³). When I speak of *chandra* (moon) and *surya* (sun) principles, students should not confuse them with the physical sun and moon.

The moon is a representation of the mind, meaning that with thoughts pertaining to the world, one attains the *chandra loka* — a plane of existence where mental delights are experienced. The sun represents the light of the eyes. When our vision (*drishti*) is merged with creation (*srishti*), we perceive the truth of the scriptures. Therefore, the term scripture (*sastra*) does not refer only to certain books. The command (*saasana*) of the eyes is *sastra*, meaning that direct proof available through a clarified vision is the real scripture.

For direct proof (*pratyaksha pramana*)⁴, the sun is the basis. For proof by inference (*anumana pramana*), the mind or moon is the basis. For proof by sound (*shabda pramana*), speech is the basis. Therefore, humanness is transformed into Divinity only when we have unity and purity in thought, word, and deed (*trikarana sudhi*).

Hiranyagarbha

God, as manifested in the outer, physical world, is called *Viswa*. God, as the inner presence in our mind, is called *Hiranyagarbha*. From where did this distinction between “inner” and “outer” arise? The mind principle is very pure. During times of agitation, when it contemplates on God, it is transformed into light (*prakaanti*). Therefore, there is peace in unrest, light in peace, supreme effulgence in light (*prasanti in asanti, prakanti in prasanti, parama jyoti in prakanti*), and this supreme effulgence is the *Atma* — so declare the *Vedas*.

So, the mind principle is called *Hiranyagarbha*. *Hiranya* is gold, *garbha* is womb. Meaning, *Hiranyagarbha* is He with a golden *lingam* in His body.

[At this point, Bhagavan materialised a golden *lingam* and held it aloft. There was clapping and excitement among devotees.]

This golden *lingam* is present in His body near the heart. The entire cosmos is contained within this golden *lingam*. America, Japan, Germany, France, England, India, Pakistan ... all are contained in this *lingam*! Why is *Hiranyagarbha* golden? Gold undergoes no change. It survives in the earth for any length of time. In the same way, the heart does not change, no matter how long the individual lives in this world. This is not the “physical heart” but the “spiritual heart,” which conceals infinite powers. Divinity in a person cannot be understood from a physical perspective.

The golden principle of *Hiranya* resides as twelve manifestations in the heart. These forms are called *Aditya Brahmas*. Composed of the Aditya Brahmas, the sun shines with a golden hue and traverses a path that takes twelve months to complete. Truly, there is no beginning or end to the sun’s motion, no sunrise and no sunset. When the sun comes above the horizon, we call it day. When it is hidden below the horizon, night. There are not two suns, one for day and another for night! Pippalada explained such subtleties to Satyakaama.

Vedic terms

For the spiritual aspirant, there are two paths: feeling (*bhaava*) and spiritual effort (*sadhana*)⁵. One who experiences the *Om (pranava)* with feeling cannot know their own Divinity. Even if self-realisation does dawn in that person, it is temporary, and the person lapses into ignorance again. One who enters into spiritual effort reaches the divine abode of the sun and, from there, enters into Brahman’s abode.

Who or what is Brahman? Do not imagine Brahman to be merely a four-headed God or some other being. The term *Brahma* means immense, measureless, expansive. To attain *Brahma* is to become vast in perception, like an ocean.

Science lacks this broad-mindedness. It strives to discern sub-atomic particles within the atom, smaller particles within these particles and so on. But spirituality is vaster than the vastest (*Mahato maheeyaan*). The nature of Brahman is vastness. The moon symbolises the mind. The sun represents the brightness of the eye. One who appreciates the significance of these terms in *Vedanta* alone can understand spirituality in its entirety.

For example, here is a *lingam*. What is this *lingam*? Is it present in the physical body? In *Vedanta* it is called *angushta maatram*, thumb-sized. We consider “heart” to mean the physical heart. No, no. The spiritual heart has a golden power — eternal, effulgent, all-encompassing. This power is called the *lingam*.

³ From the *Purusha Sooktam*, a prayer and description of Purusha, the Cosmic form of the Lord, i.e. Lord Narayana.

⁴ Ancient Indian logic outlines specific methods of arriving at the Truth (*pramaanaas*). *Pratyaksha*, *anumaana*, and *shabda* are the three main methods.

⁵ *Bhaava* and *sadhana* are explained in detail in Discourse 9.

One small example. Some of you have gone on pilgrimage to Badrinath, Kedarnath, and Amarnath⁶. Where do these places exist? They reside in your heart, through your recollections. Just close your eyes and think of Badrinath. The temple, the surrounding peaks, the Alakananda river—all are printed in your memory. Whatever you have seen and done is recorded in your heart, strengthened by recollection, meaning that the whole world dwells within you.

The spiritual heart

Whatever you see outside is a reflection of the inner being. Whatever you speak is the reflection of the “inner talk”. Whatever you do is a reflection of the “inner action”. Hence, to act upon what is within you is right conduct (*dharma*). To speak clearly and honestly of the matters in your heart is truth (*sathya*). To think about matters in your heart truthfully and clearly is peace (*santhi*). To “understand” your heart is *nonviolence*. To trust your heart completely is *love*. Hence, *sathya*, *dharma*, *santhi*, *prema*, and *ahimsa* are only facets of your heart.

Humanness means unity in thought, word, and deed. What is meant by *dharma*? To project your thoughts as words and to demonstrate your words in action is *dharma*. This is what is meant by: “The proper study of mankind is man.”

Today these three are not in unity. The heart, which is meant to be pure consciousness (*chinmaya*), is becoming muddy and dirty (*mrinmaya*). Why? Because of selfishness. In which direction must your selfishness be channeled? Toward *Hiranyagarbha*, which is divine, bright, ever new, eternal, and blissful. That means we must focus on that which is changeless. Everything around us is temporary and false. In this context, the *Bhagavad Gita* declares, The world is temporary (*Anityam ashaashvatam lokam*). Only the feeling emanating from the heart is true and permanent. Ideals practised with this heartfelt feeling take one to immortality.

Illusion

What is immortality? Consider a snake, which sheds its skin. The snake and its skin become separate, and the snake shines all the more. When you acquire Divinity, the gross (*mrinmaya*) and conscious (*chinmaya*) aspects become separate. The body is impermanent. The *Hiranya* principle is true. The blanket that hides awareness of the *Hiranya* principle is *maya*. Just as a snake is covered by its skin, *maya* envelops humanity. *Maya* is nothing but illusion. It does not exist as a separate being or power. It is your own delusion. When do we succumb to it? When spiritual wisdom (*jnana*) is absent.

You look at a rope and mistake it for a snake. Why? There is not enough light to see clearly. In other words, with a mixture of light and darkness, there arises delusion. When you shine a torch, you realise it is a rope. It was a rope even before you used the torch! It is a rope when you shone the torch. Before you used the torch, the snake did not leave and the rope did not arrive. The disappearance of the snake and the advent of the rope are both delusions. Reality alone is present, always. Coming and going of opposites is illusion.

Truth is one, seers elaborate on it in various ways (*Ekam at vipraah bahudaa vadanti*). The *Vedas* chant, Salutations to *Hiranyagarbha* (*Hiranyagarbhaaya Namah*). In your heart, in your stomach, there is a changeless, golden, permanent, true Divinity. This power emanating from the heart makes the eyes see, the ears hear, and the mouth speak.

Science and spirituality

But scientists do not trust in this unseen power. Why? Their vision is limited to that which is accessible to the senses. Today’s research becomes outdated tomorrow. Tomorrow’s research is always considered the truth! This cycle of old-new-old-new is misleading. Spirituality has no old, no new.

That is full, This is full.
From the full is born the full.
When the full is subtracted from the full,
What remains is the full alone.

Poornamadah poornamidam
Poornaat poornam udachyate
Poornasya poornam aadaaya
Poornam evaavasishyate

The investigations of science depend on human intellect. Spiritual research is based on the heart. The heart is related to “right”. Head has to do with “responsibility”. The head is like a Polaroid picture. The heart is like a photographic negative. Any number of copies can be printed with a negative but not with a Polaroid image. Therefore, people are infinitely more valuable than the machines they create.

Scientists believe in machines (*yantras*) while spiritualists believe in chants (*mantras*). Scientists follow science, “saint-ists” follow spirituality! The saint deals with the full circle, the scientist with a semi-circle. Spirituality ends where it begins, like a full circle. When half of a full circle is erased, the resulting ‘C’ shape is science. It begins somewhere and ends somewhere else, with a host of contradictions in between. In fact, there is no truth in science. Today’s truth is tomorrow’s falsehood. Spirituality has been true in the past, is true today, and will be true tomorrow and a million years hence.

⁶ Places of pilgrimage in the Himalaya mountains.

Spirituality emanates from the heart. But people forget their nature and waste life. People are exhilarated at their technological prowess; they are proud of the wealth they create and consider it their true property. No, no. "People are more important than all the wealth of the world".

People invented the computer. When one asks the computer, "It is raining now, what should I do?", it replies, "Carry an umbrella and take this route to go home". Did the computer think of the response on its own? Or was it inserted in advance by a person, only to be reproduced mechanically? The computer is nothing but "rubbish"!

We waste millions by relying excessively on computers. Man has a "natural brain". It is man's brain that is behind the computer's brain. Without relying on our real brain, we trust in the artificial brain of the computer.

When you pour seeds into the top of a hand-mill, flour emerges out of the bottom. The computer is no different. It ejects whatever is inserted. If it truly had answers, could it tell you the date of your death? It does not know the answer. Why? Humanity, its creator, does not know the answer! The computer knows what the scientist knows. It is the scientist's reflection. Today people do not trust themselves but rely on their creation, their reflection.

Speech, mind, life force, and Atma

Therefore, students, faith in yourself is very important. Develop self-confidence. There is nothing greater than the *Atma*. Speech, mind, and the life force (*prana*) together constitute the *Atma*. Of these three, the life force is most important. The life force has no end, although the body it dwells in must perish. It is present in all beings like a reflection in a mirror. When mind, speech, and the life force come together, the fourth, *Atma*, emerges.

You know that in chemistry, when you mix some substances together, a new compound is formed. Those who chew *paan* leaves know about the betel nut. The betel nut is brown, betel leaves are green, and the lime mixture added to it is white in colour. However, when the three of them are chewed together, the resulting colour is red. When man's mind, speech, and life force come together, the *Atma* is revealed. With the unity of these three, our life attains fulfilment.

Everything is contained within a person's heart. With this in mind, the *Vedas* address a person in the *sushumna* state (the state of an undisturbed, joyous mind) as *Hiranyagarbha*. In this state, unlimited bliss is experienced.

Take a worldly example. When you find a copper coin somewhere, you're happy, but not too elated. Even a piece of brass or silver fails to excite us. But if you find even a small piece of gold, you are exhilarated.

Gold gives joy. What is this gold? It is also found in mud. But mud is found everywhere, while gold in mud occurs rarely. Therefore, it is given greater value than mud. If gold occurred in abundance, nobody would value it. We find flesh, bones, muscles, and blood throughout our body. The heart is like valuable gold amidst the inert body matter. *Hiranyagarbha* is the heart, which bestows value, effulgence, and ideals to humanity.

Depth of Upanishads

Students! I know that *Prasnopanishad* is profound and abstruse, and I am putting you all through a lot of strain. We shall conclude our discussion today and use the remaining days to confer on issues that are integral to day-to-day living. Even great scholars and *pandits* find the *Upanishads* complex. You students are not familiar with Sanskrit terms used in the *Vedas*. You need to translate them into English. It is not surprising, then, that most of this material is beyond your grasp. You hold English (*Aangla bhaasha*) in high esteem, but not the language of the *Atma* (*Atma bhaasha*).

It is pointless for Swami to elaborate upon these priceless gems when the listeners cannot understand them. If you teach Standard X lessons to a boy of Standard I, can he possibly absorb anything? You will benefit more if you are taught lessons appropriate to your level. Starting tomorrow, we shall talk about education, the path of action (*karma yoga*), righteousness (*dharma*), duties and obligations (*kartavyam*) and various aspects of life in this world.

"Progress" in education

Keeping in view the atmosphere in the world, it is important to teach students about morality and ethics while equipping them with worldly knowledge. Progress in science has caused erosion in moral values. What good is technological progress without human values? Education claims to be making "progress, progress ..."

Morality and discipline remain relegated only to books.

Hearts stink of pollution.

Hands engage only in selfish actions.

This is the "progress" in today's education.

Those who impart education are derided.

The one who feeds is starved in recompense!

The one who helps is harmed in return!

This is the "progress" in today's education.

Is this “progress”? No, no, no!

Gratitude is our life-breath. When we receive favours from others, we must demonstrate gratitude to them, even life-long —meaning that you should love your parents and respect your teachers. Consider your fellow people as humans like you and develop appropriate relations with them. If you do not have such a sense of collective existence, what has education taught you? Tradition and values (*samskaaram*) need to be cultivated along with knowledge. We shall learn about *samskaaram* tomorrow.

28 May 1991

ॐ ॐ ॐ