

## 9. Prasnopanishad – Answers to the Sixth Student

Peace is non-existent, truth is scarce.  
Fear of weapons has mounted.  
Selfishness is the cause of these harmful trends.  
These words convey the truth.

Brahman (God) is truth, wisdom, and infinite (*Sathyam jnanam anantam Brahma*). Imperishable, Supreme Self, Supreme Principle, Knower of the Truth of Life (*Aksharam, Paramatma, Parathathwam, Kshetrajna*) — these terms are merely synonyms for the *Atma*. Names are based on place, time, and situation.

Every being aspires to be happy, to keep misery at bay. Although one desires joy and peace, why is one compelled to experience sorrow and difficulties? Sorrow, unrest, and fear are nothing but reflections of joy and peace. Without sorrow, joy has no value. If unrest did not exist, why would we yearn for peace? These dualities follow each other and are interdependent.

We spoke of *Om* yesterday. We say that the three sounds — *a u m* — represent the physical, astral, and solar worlds (*bhu-loka, bhuvvar-loka, and suvar-loka*). Also, the three *Vedas* — *Rig, Yajur, and Sama* — merely elaborate whatever is contained in *Om*.

### Chanting, feeling, spiritual practice

To attain the *Om* (*pranava*) principle, namely, the unity of three — three *Vedas* and three worlds — three paths are available.

First, chanting or repeating the Name of the Lord (*namasmarana*). Second, feeling (*bhaavam*). Third, spiritual effort (*sadhana*).

By chanting the Name, you can experience pleasures of the physical world (*bhu-loka*), that is, worldly comforts and amenities. All worldly pleasures can be obtained through chanting the divine Name, but these are temporary and unreal.

Next, feeling. What is feeling? Feeling is: appreciating that a divine Power runs the world of living and non-living entities, making this conviction central to one's daily activities, and contemplating upon that Power. By treading the path of feeling, one reaches the region of the moon principle (*chandra loka*) — the realm of the mind where one enjoys peace and contentment. To trust that there is a basis (*mulam*) for the gross (*sthulam*) world is feeling (*bhaavam*).

Through repetition of the name of God, one acquires physical comforts. Through feeling (conviction that a divine Power runs the world), one acquires mental peace. But one remains dissatisfied with these two joys

and proceeds to the third stage, spiritual practice. Spiritual practice takes one to the realm of the sun (*suvar-loka*), meaning the *Atma* principle, characterized by the highest awareness and consciousness. It is the highest wisdom (*jnana*) born of divine vision. In this wisdom, which reveals the unity of everything, there is peace.

*Bhu-loka* and *bhuvvar-loka* pertain to the physical world, which is fleeing and unreal. *Bhu-loka* is gross (*sthulam*) while *bhuvvar-loka* is subtle (*sukshmam*). The body is gross, the mind is subtle. *Bhu-loka* and *bhuvvar-loka* relate to the body and the mind. *Suvar-loka* — the realm of the sun — is the domain of the *Atma*.

Through repetition of the Name, contemplation that a divine Power runs the world (*bhaavam*), and spiritual practice, these three planes of existence are attained. When these three paths are followed, one can reach a state beyond the three worlds, a state of supreme peace and bliss. This is the goal of human life. These were the answers given by Sage Pippalada to Satyakama.

### The Divine Being and the sixteen attributes

Sukesha, son of Sage Bharadwaja, rose and prayed. “Swami!” All scriptures declare that there is a Divine Being, *Purushothama*, who is a reservoir of 16 attributes (*kalaas*). Who is this Being? What are the 16 attributes? Where are they found? Please appease my curiosity.”

Pippalada smiled. “Son, Sukesha! *Purushothama* is not limited to a secluded place. He is present as awareness in every being and experiences bliss in that form. He is Being, Awareness, Bliss (*Sat-Chit-Ananda*).”

*Sat* means one who is changeless, true, and permanent, to whom nothing can be added. *Chit* is one who recognizes complete awareness. The one who experiences *Sat* and *Chit* is the embodiment of bliss (*Ananda*).

Names and forms may vary, but Being and Awareness lead to the same goal. The right and left eye are distinct, no doubt. But when you open both of them, left and right merge in your vision. Similarly, the unity of Being and Awareness is Bliss. These three are present within every human being.

*Sat-Chit-Ananda* is one who possessing all 16 attributes (*kalaas*). Now, the scriptures have expounded on the 16 attributes in various ways, confusing the common person. The attributes are not meant to be earned by us but, instead, are natural to us.

Space (*akasa*) carries sound. Sound causes wind (*vayu*). Wind gives birth to fire (*agni*) and brightness,

through which water is made possible. The grosser aspect of water is itself earth. The five elements are space, air, fire, water, and earth.

The five life forces (*pranas*) in our body are in-breath, downward air, digestive air, upward air, and air diffused throughout the body (*prana, apana, samana, udana, and vyana*).

Together, the five elements and five life forces form ten concepts. The five organs of perception (*jnanendriyas*)—eyes, ears, nose, tongue, and skin—bring the total to fifteen. The mind is the sixteenth. These 16 attributes shine in every human being.

### Individualised and collective awareness

The human attributes (*kalaas*) are all-encompassing and full (*purnam*). The one who experiences these attributes in all their fullness, employs them to recognize the state of fullness, and attains that state qualifies for the title of *purusha* or *Purushothama*.<sup>1</sup>

Who is *purusha*? It does not mean one who wears pants and a shirt, namely, a male! In the body, which is called *pura, purusha*, or self, is the consciousness, the awareness, the divine Power that pulsates from top to toe. The one who experiences this awareness is also *purusha*. The One who appears in everyone, or the collective consciousness throughout the cosmos, is the Supreme Lord of All, or *Purushothama*. In other words, the individualised awareness (soul) is *purusha*, while the collective awareness is *Purushothama*.

What must the soul (*purusha*) do to sanctify the time in the body? Sound, air, fire, water, and earth—the five elements—must be regarded as manifestations of God and used appropriately.

### Sacred use of senses

God has bestowed on people the five organs of perception (*jnanandriyas*)<sup>2</sup>. Sight is fire. It must be used in the proper manner—see good. Only then does this attribute of sight become a divine instrument.

Second is hearing. We must employ our ears to hear only words that encourage awareness of our pure, transcendental nature.

Third, the nose. Sweet fragrances do not just confer joy but are conducive to health as well. Bad odors lead to bad health and disturb mental peace. Good smells are God's manifestations in the air.

<sup>1</sup> *Purushothama* = *Purusha* + *Uthama*, where *Uthama* means "best among". In the *Vedas*, *Purusha* means *God*, but it is also the common term for *male* in Sanskrit and many Indian languages.

<sup>2</sup> Eyes, ears, nose, tongue, and skin.

Next, the skin. The sense of touch is very pure. It must not be used indiscriminately. To sanctify the sense of touch, our ancient sages left villages and towns, sought solitude in forests, and spent their time in silent meditation.

There is a divine power in our body called the power of awareness (*Chit Sakthi*). This power is like a current. With touch, currents in bodies are exchanged. It is very likely that in this process, our good qualities deplete and bad qualities increase! Therefore, it is advisable to touch only pious and great individuals, especially their feet, to ensure that our virtues flourish and our vices subside.

When you sit for mediation, ensure that you are not close to others, that you do not touch another's body. Sit alone, focus on your innate potential, express it in behavior, and mentally enjoy the Divine Power, which is within you and outside you. God (*Narayana*) is inside, outside, everywhere (*Antar bahischa thath sarva vyapya Narayan shiutah*).

When we cultivate friendships and attachments indiscriminately, our Divinity is drained day by day. Our ancient sages used the five elements and the five sense organs in sacred ways and transformed themselves into divine personages.

Swami told you yesterday: our body has 720 million nerves (*naadis*). The life force called *vyana* (air diffused throughout the body) pervades every nerve uniformly. This life force ensures health, joy, and enthusiasm.

*Vyana* manifests as a thousand-petaled lotus (*sahasraara padma*) in the crown of the head. When the *kundalini* energy journeys from the root (*muladhara*) chakra to this lotus in the crown of the head, the petals blossom. Then the *kundalini* glows and, with infinite effulgence, joins the thousand-petaled lotus.

People today, drained of this divine energy, are susceptible to all kinds of sorrow. Our sages were made of stronger material. They purified the root chakra, awakened the *kundalini* power, made it traverse the path to the thousand-petaled lotus, and redeemed the purpose of their birth. The five life forces must be utilized properly. Only then can we attain the state of Divinity (*Purusha*).

### The Source is within

Thus, although one has the 16 attributes within oneself, one is unable to use them properly, unable to recognize one's Divinity.

When you have a wish-fulfilling cow (*kamadhenu*),  
granting milk upon mere request,  
Why buy an ordinary cow paying money?  
When the wish-fulfilling tree is with you,  
Why crave the wild weeds growing around your  
house?

When you have a golden mountain shining with infinite brightness,  
Why search for nuggets of silver and gold?

Although a person is the embodiment of Divinity, which expresses itself as 16 attributes, and the person contains these 16 attributes within themselves, the person does not recognize their divine significance and thereby performs actions that wreck peace of mind. Not only do people not attain the state of Godliness (*Purusha* or *Purushothama*), they slip downward into animal and demonic tendencies. Why? They do not use the 16 attributes in the right way.

### Give up selfishness, sanctify the attributes

Yes, you may not be well-versed in *Vedas*, epics, and *Puranas*, but you put into practice the basic morals in daily life. You must speak the truth, and speak it sweetly. Speak words that instill joy in others. Never hurt others with words.

We know these teachings, but we fail to practice them! Why? Selfishness, selfishness. In the anxiety to realize one's selfish goals, one uses the 16 attributes in detrimental ways.

People are endowed with 16 attributes, which are full (*purna*). One who sanctifies these attributes and recognizes their divine significance qualifies to be called God (*Purushothama*). One who wastes the attributes is the lowest among people.

The answer to Sukesa's question was that God (*Purushothama*) is *not* a separate Being residing in a secret place. God is not in some other place (*desham*) but in your own body (*deham*)! Similarly, sin does not reside outside but in your ruinous actions. Actions alone turn us into *purushas*. *Purushothamas*, humans, demons, or animals. Actions can lead us to higher states but can also drag us into a hellish existence.

### The nature of Avatars

The *Puranas* declare that one who has completely sanctified the 16 attributes is God (*Purushothama*). Therefore, only the *Avatars* can apply the 16 attributes with total, unalloyed selflessness. Whatever is done, seen, spoken, or thought by *Avatars* is absolutely selfless. No *Avatar* at any time has ever used His five organs of perception, five life forces, five elements, or mind for selfish ends. While conducting themselves as ordinary people, they have unmistakably displayed purity, truth, and eternal qualities through unselfish actions. People are blind to such subtle truths and thus unable to understand their own humanness.

### The Invisible Awareness

Pippalada bestowed these grand teachings upon Sukesa. He instructed him to enquire into the unity of the gross (*sthulam*) and the subtle (*sukshmam*). The gross is perishable; the subtle, indestructible. The world is perishable; the *Atma*, imperishable. Life is perishable; God is imperishable. Only when you grasp the significance of these principles can you understand the 16 attributes (*kalaas*) in their fullness.

The entire cosmos, mobile and immobile, has emerged from the Indestructible Principle (*akshara*). This Indestructible Principle has given birth to this world, sustains it, and ultimately merges it into itself. The unity of the individual soul (*jiva*) and God (*Deva*) is indestructible (*akshara*). The combination of the temporary and the permanent is God.

The 16 attributes are sanctified when they are dedicated to the *Atma*. Let your vision not be restricted to the external, physical sight but proceed inward to the *Atma*. Foster the feeling that your physical sight is made possible only by the light of the *Atma*. Do not misconstrue your organs of action (*karmendriyas*) to be the source of awareness. Your ears are able to hear only because of the power of the *Atma*. The invisible cause is the power of the *Atma*, called *prajna*.

Our external vision beholds the world, called *Viswa*. The inner vision, the dream, and deep sleep states pertain to divine wisdom (*prajna*). This wisdom gives birth to effulgence (*tejas*). Whatever we do, see, think, and say, we must dedicate to the *Atma*. Then, the attributes will blossom to their full capacity. How? Rivers with distinct names and forms flow in their respective directions, but, ultimately, all rivers acquire the name, form, and qualities of the ocean.

Similarly, the five elements are distinct streams. So are the five life forces and the five organs of perception. Lastly, the mind is the most turbulent river of all! When all these streams are offered to the *Atma*, they merge into divine wisdom (*prajna*). They lose their individual names and forms and acquire the immaculate qualities of the *Atma*—formless, true, eternal, unsullied. Hence, to become God (*Purushothama*), we must just use the 16 attributes meaningfully.

(Swami concluded with the *bhajan*, “*Hari Bhajana Bina Sukha Shanti Nahin*”.)

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