

The Science of Upanishads – Part 56: Conclusions-Part-2

(April 11 –April 17, 2018)

Last week in Part-1 of Conclusions, we discussed in detail about Ātmā and its relation with Paramātmā (Brahman). We also elaborated on why Upaniṣhads say that only by knowing the Ātmā that leads to Paramātmā (Brahman), one can attain bliss. **This week, we will explore what does “knowing the Ātmā” really mean? How does one go about knowing the Ātmā?**

According to Upaniṣhads, knowing the Ātmā is not simply understanding; it is also experiencing it! Then, the question is how to experience it. Actually, we are always experiencing the Ātmā; but we do not recognize that fact. Take for example, sweets like Halva, Gulab Jamun, Jilebi, etc. We enjoy eating them. Sugar is the main constituent in them. Although they all taste somewhat differently from each other, but without sugar none of them will taste any good. However, **we often simply say that “Jilebi tastes great or Gulab Jamun is delectable” without consciously recognizing or appreciating the fact that it is the sugar in them which gives each of them the delicious taste it possesses. Experiencing the sugar in them as the responsible material for their taste is achieved only by recognizing its presence and consciously feeling it. Likewise, experiencing the Ātmā is achieved only by recognizing it in everything and consciously feeling it. This state of conscious feeling is achieved only through meditation.**

Then the next question is about how to perform the meditation. The following is only a model, not an unassailable prescription. In a peaceful place and time, sit erect on a firm seat with the legs folded and hands placed on the thighs. The intention is to sit in a very comfortable posture. Close the eyes; concentrate on the upper tip of the nose between eye-brows; slowly move the attention backwards horizontally to touch the cross line that passes through the head at level with the ears. It is approximately at this point the Thalamus or the Heart which is the centre of consciousness within the body, is situated. **The Praśna Upanishad says that Heart is the centre of consciousness, the light of Ātmā; from the Heart consciousness spreads to all parts of the body through nerves. Therefore, concentrate attention on the Heart and feel the flow of consciousness from the Heart to all parts of the body, like water from a perennial spring.** Contemplate that every cell of the body is filled with the splendor of pure consciousness and that the whole body is drenched in it. Feel yourself as being inundated with that brilliance. Remain in this position as long as possible; it will refresh you with new energy. By constant practice, you will feel like being in that magnificence constantly. While being in that position you will have no more prayers to be made to any external agent. At this state, there is no ‘another’ to pray to.

This is only a beginning. **Constant practice will stabilize one in the luster of consciousness. This is the highest goal of the Religion of Upaniṣads; such identification with Ātmā makes one immortal.** Though the instances of reaching that goal are very rare, one should not abstain or give up. Any effort, however small may it be, will be helpful in bringing about inner enlightenment to a proportionate level; it takes us closer and closer to the ultimate principle.

Stay Tuned for Part-3 of Conclusions.....